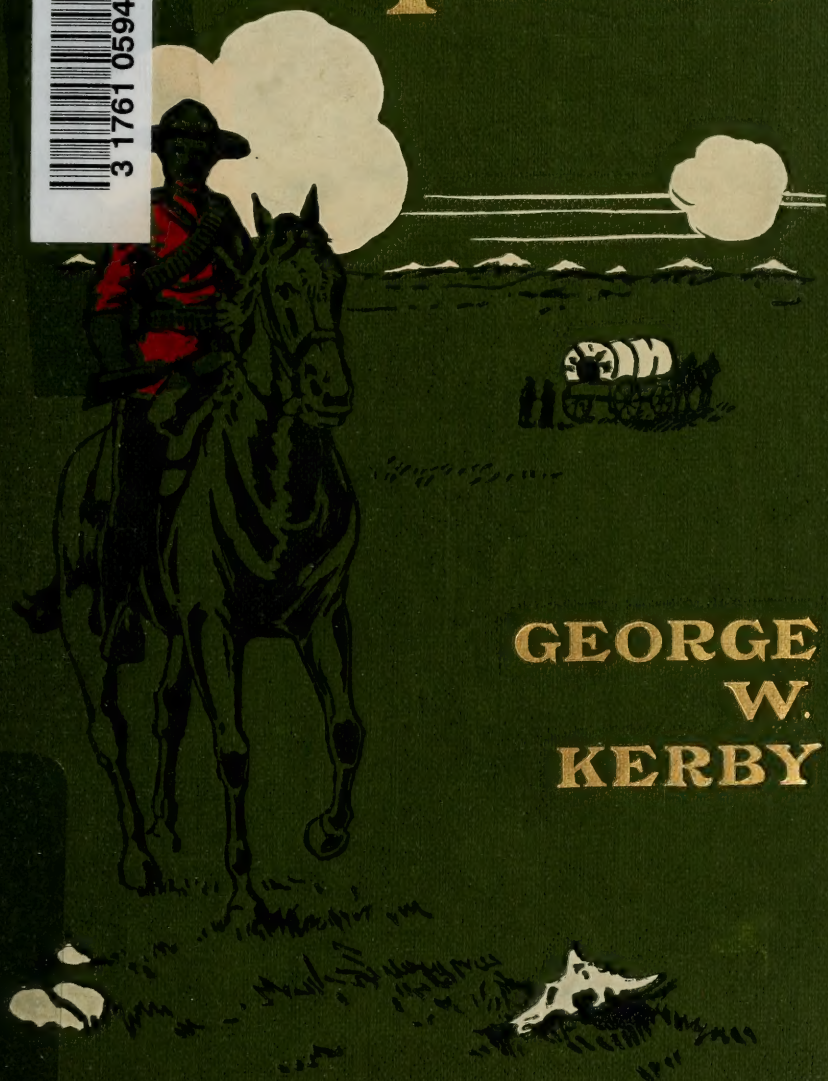



THE BROKEN TRAIL



3 1761 05946663 1



GEORGE
W.
KERBY



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

THE BROKEN TRAIL



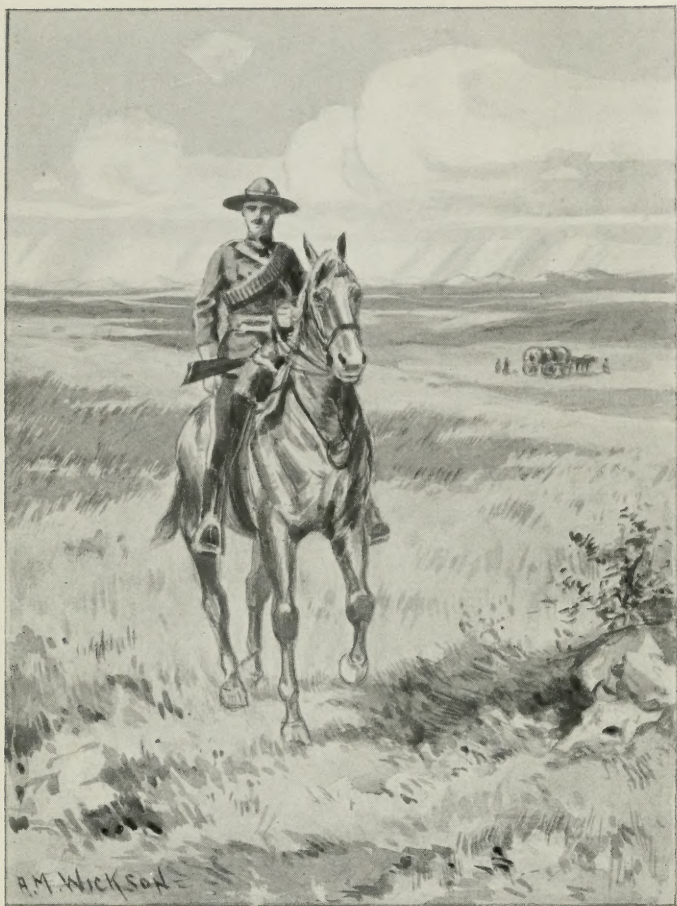
To My Friend

The Rev George Dickson

with warm appreciation
of his ministry -

Geo. W. Kerby

July 7th / 27.



"He was a member of the North-West Mounted Police."

Page 59.

The Broken Trail

PAGES FROM A PASTOR'S
EXPERIENCE IN WESTERN
CANADA. 7 7 7 7 7 7

By

George W. Kerby, B.A.


Central Methodist Church,
Calgary, Alberta



2nd Edition

Toronto
William Briggs
1910

355979
14. 10. 38.



Copyright, Canada, 1909, by
GEORGE W. KERBY, B.A.

TO
My Wife
AND THE CONGREGATION
OF THE
CENTRAL METHODIST CHURCH
CALGARY
I INSCRIBE THIS LITTLE
BOOK

PREFACE

THESE incidents form some of the more outstanding experiences of my pastorate in the West. They are not intended to convey the impression that the West is in any way worse than the East, but my desire in sending them forth, in the midst of the strain and stress of an arduous pastorate, is, that the recital of them, in this more permanent form, may be abundantly blessed, especially to the young life of our Dominion.

The facts in these stories have been in no way altered, but I have taken the liberty of adding some coloring and shading to give them a better literary value.

“For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
Where truth in closest words shall fail,
When truth embodied in a tale
Shall enter in at lowly doors.”

PREFACE

I wish especially to acknowledge my indebtedness to my friend, Eugene Milne Cosgrove, at whose suggestion I undertook to place these incidents before the public, for invaluable assistance in revising for publication.

G. W. KERBY.

The Parsonage,
Calgary, September, 1909.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE phenomenal sale of the first edition in four weeks, has made a second edition necessary.

The kindly reception it received from the reviewers and the public, throughout the Dominion, and even in the States, not only exceeded my fondest hopes but confirmed, abundantly, that the book has fulfilled the purpose with which I sent it forth.

No less, indeed, do I prize the many letters that have come to me daily, from hearts that have been touched and sanctified.

They will be cherished as the many precious seals and tokens of the author's work and ministry.

G. W. KERBY.

CONTENTS



| | | |
|--------------------|--------|-----|
| PREFACE | | 7 |
| I A SON OF HOLLAND | | 15 |
| II THE DESPERADO | | 77 |
| III THE OUTCAST | | 151 |
| THE FORBIDDEN CITY | | 181 |
| A Commentary | | |

ILLUSTRATIONS



| | Page |
|--|------|
| "He was a member of the North-West Mounted Police " <i>Frontispiece</i> | |
| "He moved a step toward her " | 44 |
| Eight hundred miles across a continent to win a bride | 72 |
| "Throw down your arms," he shouted, .. "I'm a desperate man " | 92 |
| "A minute later he appeared with his hands over his head " | 103 |
| "I was pushing my way through the brush and willow by the river bank, when I stumbled on a cabin " | 151 |
| "This, my child, is the pledge and symbol of the Divine mercy " | 166 |

*Love is indestructible,
Its holy flame forever burneth;
From Heaven it came, to Heaven re-
turneth.*

—Southey.

*You may break, you may shatter the vase,
if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round
it still.*

—Moore.

*With thee, my bark, I'll swiftly go
Athwart the foaming brine;
Nor care what land thou bear'st me to,
So not again to mine.*

*Welcome, welcome, ye dark blue waves;
And when you fail my sight,
Welcome, ye deserts and ye caves!
My native land—Good night!*

—Byron.

But the greatest of these is love.

—Saint Paul.

A SON OF HOLLAND

HE came from the low, flat lands washed by the Northern Sea. Massive in his strength, tall and broad-shouldered, neatly groomed and garbed, he looked like some modern Apollo. He reminded me of the days when physical prowess was the primal glory of the race. His long, dark hair lay fold upon fold over his brow, clustering loosely round his bright ruddy face.

His features were somewhat rugged, but there was considerable delicacy of expression in the contour of his face, and in the soft light of his blue eyes. Fate and the world had mellowed and refined.

It was four years since he had left his sea-girt home for the great lone land, where, perchance, he might forget. But his hungering, yearning love only grew with the years—the land of hope was the land of illusion. All he loved, his joy,

THE BROKEN TRAIL

his trust in life, lay behind him in the wake of the waves, and that no waters of Lethe could ever quench.

The intensity of his gaze, no less than his long black hair and soldierly bearing, arrested my attention as he wandered up the aisle and took a seat near the pulpit. It was the eve of Christmas. Before us blended a vision of the near and the distant. We were travelling back again through the mystic years to the shrine of childhood. Home, home, home was on our lips, and repeated in a thousand hearts. It was the hour when hope was born.

Next morning I was in the study earlier than usual, and while yet the dawn was breaking I was on my way to Bethlehem. Peace in the home, dear Lord, peace in the empire, peace in the heart—peace on earth, good will to men. The old song repeated itself again and again.

On my ears fell the heavy footsteps

A SON OF HOLLAND

of a man who for an hour or more had been pacing the cement sidewalk in front of the window. It was strange enough at that hour of the morning, and at intervals in my work I would listen with a feeling of expectancy. Ultimately he came towards the door and remained there for some time without making any further advance. More from curiosity than from interest, I opened the door, and there, standing on the steps, was the man whose appearance had attracted the attention of so many people, and my own, at the service the night before.

He was so unlike the usual type of peripatetic wanderer that finds his way to a Western parsonage that I welcomed him as cordially as one would greet a friend. The strength and lustre of his personality as he stood with a broken apology upon his lips made a ready impression upon me.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

"A happy Christmas to you," I said, laying my hand on his broad shoulder.

"A happy Christmas to you, sir," he replied, with a slight Dutch accent. "I have come early and you will excuse me . . . I cannot live this way, and it is just as difficult to die. . . I suppose you have often to meet men like me?"

"Yes, and I am always glad to."

"I am a stranger to you, sir," he continued meditatively. "My name is Wilbur Wolfendon. I have come to ask a favor of you; you will give me your confidence, I hope."

"You are already assured of that. Be seated, please."

"You see, sir, I am from Holland; perhaps this will explain——," and he put a bundle of letters on the table, some written in German and some in Dutch. "I have carried them in my pocket for

A SON OF HOLLAND

years, and no one has ever seen them before."

It is strange how, as the years go by, such things as these become bound to our hearts with bands of gold. Indeed, we invest the thing itself with personality—a place, a book, a ring, a letter touched by a vanished hand or hallowed by some angel-presence.

"These are from your mother?" I inquired.

"No, not all," he replied, pointing to two written in fine German characters. "Only this, and this."

"Your mother spoke German, did she?"

"No, not often. She spoke Dutch, but she wrote me in German, and sometimes in English. This is the last letter she wrote, and this," he said, dramatically, in a brave attempt to conceal his feelings, "is all I have to remind me of her."

He slipped a photograph from the

THE BROKEN TRAIL

bundle and gazed intently at it before handing it to me.

She was dressed in typical out-door costume, and was smiling her sweetness and sadness into the face of the child that rested in her arms.

"Your mother was a beautiful woman," I said; "I can understand how much you have missed her."

He merely nodded, and the hot tears that had so long glistened in his eyes now rolled down his cheeks. Then he turned aside a little, as if to look out at the window.

"It is all right, quite manly, my friend. A man who has a tear to shed over the memory of his mother is not far from the kingdom. And you—well, you have changed somewhat; this must have been taken many years ago."

"Twenty-three years," he replied, taking the photograph from my hand and

A SON OF HOLLAND

shaking his head sadly, "twenty-three years," and he tied the bundle together with as much care as he had opened it.

"Time is a great healer—try and be brave."

"Yes, but there are some things that even time cannot heal. For four years my heart has been bleeding and the wound is just as deep to-day as ever." He sat down on the couch in a reclining position and with his fingers brushed back the long hair from his forehead.

The words were spoken in deep, measured tones, and without the accent attached to his earlier speech. This seemed the more strange when I looked at his strong physique and massive form, for one does not usually associate tenderness with strength.

"You are too young and too brave to talk so despairingly. Life should be full of promise to a manhood such as yours."

THE BROKEN TRAIL

“And it may yet be, please God,” he replied, as he straightened himself up. “I have always tried to be brave. Let me tell you.” And he began to relate in stirring words what brought him to the sorrow of that hour.

His home was near Delftshaven, and he had often stood on the spot where the Pilgrim Fathers set sail for the New World. Like the murmur of the sea in the convolutions of the smooth-lipped shell, he could still hear it, the grey North Sea, kissing the shore as he lay dreaming through the long summer day.

When his parents died he was left in the care of an uncle, who, to be free from responsibility, sent him to a monastic institution in France. At first he was very happy. His studies in French and Latin brought him much comfort, and he received from his tutors many evidences of their appreciation of his progress and

A SON OF HOLLAND

ability. But the religious life of the institution, *de rigueur*, had no fascination for him, and strange stirrings would swell in his soul for the sound of the sea he loved so well.

A young Russian monk, known in the order as Father Cyril, whose duty it was to teach philosophy to the novitiate, showed him many personal favors, and in the hours allotted to recreation he would often call at the dormitory for him and walk arm in arm in the secluded haunts of the abbey. To him, indeed, he attributed many of the noble thoughts and ideals that kept him strong in the after years.

As their friendship deepened the homesickness passed away—for why should he long for home when home he had none, nor father, nor mother? and many times he would assure himself that he would seek no other home than the home of Father Cyril, and no other friend than the young

THE BROKEN TRAIL

Russian benedictine, his tutor and his confessor.

One day a friend and playmate of his earlier years came to visit him during the vacation of the University of Amsterdam. It happened to be the feast day of Our Lady, and the pious brotherhood were entertaining the children of the village in her honor. But it had no special interest for him, and the advent of a friend from home thrilled his heart with an unspeakable joy. They talked the afternoon away about that old world they had both outgrown, and, when his friend departed, the feelings that had made him so unhappy on his arrival at the monastery now swept anew over his soul. He was only beginning to awaken to the solitariness of his life, and to the selfishness of the uncle to whom his father had entrusted not only him but his property.

He went back to the dormitory with

A SON OF HOLLAND

bitter thoughts in his heart and an overwhelming yearning as never before for the big free world outside those dark walls. At the door Father Cyril stood waiting to walk out with him.

"I cannot go to-day, father," he said; "things have changed with me—I shall go to my room instead."

"And may God go with you, my child. You will tell father your trouble." And forthwith he followed closely behind him.

"I speak to you now as my friend?"

"Yes, my child—say on," and the father kissed him on the cheek.

"My friend from Amsterdam, as you know, visited me to-day, and he has filled my heart with a great longing that you, kind and loving as you are, cannot satisfy. Do not think hard of me, father; I am not born for this life of sacrifice and seclusion."

A pained expression stole over the face

THE BROKEN TRAIL

of the monk, and with many endearing terms he pleaded with him to remain.

“My child, there is nothing for you in this world; your parents are no more, and you need to be guarded from its temptations. You are still young; you will yet find peace here—try and be content, my child, for I shall always be a father to you.”

It was a painful reminder to him of his orphanhood and helplessness, but the assurance of the holy father's love and care made him vacillate between hope and fear.

“But, father,” he replied, “had my parents lived I should not have been here. My uncle sent me here to get rid of me. I did not know it then, but I know it to-day.”

“Your uncle did well, my child,” replied the father, with tears in his eyes. “‘He that loveth father or mother or houses or lands more than Me is not wor-

A SON OF HOLLAND

thy of Me,' ” and he kissed him on both cheeks.

The kindly attitude of the father, rather than the words he spoke, made a deep impression on the boy, and there is no doubt had he remained longer there his love for him rather than for the institution would have thrown round his shoulders the habit of a benedictine. But even that, strong and true as the love of a man for a man could be, could not silence the home stirrings in his soul.

A month or more later he was sitting at the narrow window, his head tormented with a maddening pain. It was the hour of evening prayer, and they were moving, monks and lay monks, novitiates, slowly and silently like phantoms of a dark world into the dimly lighted chapel adjoining the dormitory. Father Cyril, too, passed in later than was his wont, and through the open door Wilbur heard the low-toned

THE BROKEN TRAIL

voices singing a familiar Georgian chant. But now for the first time since his admission he could not go; something—he could feel it pulling at his heart—held him back.

Hurriedly he threw into his satchel a few things that were dear to him—the photograph he had just shown to me, and his letters, too—and leaving the light burning, he quietly closed the door and left the place forever.

“My only regret,” he said, “then and now is for Father Cyril. He had a great love for me, and I know I had for him.”

“Just like Jonathan and David,” I broke in, surprised at the dramatic turn to his story, “or Cicero and Lælius and other immortals. That could have happened only in the classic circles of Europe. It is almost impossible in the modern life of our new country.”

He was too engrossed to pay any heed to the comparison, and the sudden inter-

A SON OF HOLLAND

ruption seemed to excite him into many fervid mannerisms. His face coloured deeply, and he raised himself into an upright position.

“I went immediately to Dunkerque,” he continued, “then in a barge up the canal into Belgium, and took the train to Amsterdam, where I stayed over night and then went on to Delftshaven. My uncle was away for a week, and when he returned it was evident that he had already been acquainted with my absence from the monastery.

“‘You must notify them at once of your arrival here,’ he said, in a cool and peremptory manner, ‘and of your intention to return to your studies in a few days.’

“I was amazed that he asked me no questions, and that he did not even wait for an answer; but he was too imperious and self-willed to be approached, and too

THE BROKEN TRAIL

self-indulgent to be generous to me. However, I wrote Father Cyril, assuring him of my love and offering many apologies for my hurried exit from the house. The father did not reply—but that was not his fault.”

He spoke many words in praise of the monastery and of the order of Saint Benedict. He thought, too, that it was only through such discipline and sacrifice that men of certain proclivities—which he did not specify—could find the joy of living.

“Then there is joy in monasticism?” I asked, somewhat incredulous of his conclusions. “You speak in the present tense. Monasticism is the medium for joy hereafter.”

“Ah!” he replied, with the emphasis of deep conviction, “there is the joy of sacrifice in this life, and its reward in the life hereafter; monasticism—I do not like the word—that is the only thing for

A SON OF HOLLAND

men with temperaments like Father Cyril."

It was evident from the indefiniteness of the answer and the impatient tone of his voice that he was not inclined to meet the issue, as he could well do. He was only anxious to impress upon me that it did not suit his temperament—he was much too masculine for that.

Life at his uncle's home would have been intolerable to anyone who had not learned to bear it with the indifference of a stoic; for this much, at least, his associations with the monks had taught him—especially with Father Cyril. Indeed, it had inspired him with a fortitude when the crisis of his life came that was almost heroic.

The mysterious silence of his uncle made him suspicious of his movements. It was most unlikely that his uncle, who, for some reason or other, had sent him to

THE BROKEN TRAIL

be educated in France, should seemingly acquiesce in his unexpected return, especially when he had not been consulted. He knew, too, that he had been in communication with the monastery, for he had found an envelope bearing the postmark of the village, although the letter itself had been destroyed. Later, however, he intercepted one from the abbot reminding his uncle of the agreement made with him when his nephew was admitted to the institution, and hoping that as his nephew's guardian he would endeavour to fulfil its conditions.

What these conditions were, and his uncle's intentions regarding them after his departure from the monastery, he never found out. He was inclined to think, however, that not only had his uncle made a present of money to the brotherhood when the agreement was signed, but that he had also made a deed of him. It was

A SON OF HOLLAND

a startling discovery of his uncle's intention towards him, but the conciliatory attitude that he assumed as the days went by, and his strange silence in the matter, at length assuaged his fears.

Meanwhile, the occasional visits he made to his friend in Amsterdam had fostered in his heart a desire to go to the University, but, as his educational standard was neither advanced nor liberal enough to allow him to take his matriculation, he resolved to take a preparatory course. On his return home he told his uncle of his desire. But as it did not seem a wise proposal, his uncle said that he would need time to think it over. He was gratified, however, when his uncle informed him that he had made arrangements for him to go to a well-known boarding-school at Rotterdam.

It was night when they arrived there, and the carriage was waiting to take them

THE BROKEN TRAIL

to the place. They were received by two men at the doorway, whereupon his uncle left him hurriedly. He was shown to his bedroom, and one of the men talked with him for an hour or more. When he awoke in the morning he found he had been decoyed to an insane asylum.

"The horror of it," he exclaimed, with the undertone of passion in his voice, "made me for the moment speechless. I sought out the man who had spoken to me so graciously the night before and pled with him to let me out, but he put me off saying that he would inquire into it. I was kept under the closest observation, although the warders knew that I was as sane as they were."

It was evident to him that these men were in collusion with his uncle, and that so long as his uncle remained his guardian there was no hope of his release. However, he persisted in his demand to be

A SON OF HOLLAND

given the privilege of proving his sanity, and when the opportunity came, after endless disappointments, the mockery of the investigation sent him back to the ward in a state of absolute morbidity.

The springs of his former strength and fortitude had dried up. He was no longer able to dispel the black cloud that was hanging over his mind. Words that had often made him brave in former days—and even then he could hear Father Cyril's voice in those shadowy cloisters—had lost their buoyancy, and a nervous fear for his own safety seized hold of him.

“You cannot imagine my condition,” he said to me, throwing out his arms violently, “parents dead, home gone, decoyed into an asylum, the victim of my guardian's avarice and wickedness. I think I can be forgiven, sir, when I tell you that I attempted to take my own life.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

I have to thank the warder that he stopped me in time."

This of course was used as evidence against him, and foreclosed any further requests for an inquiry as to his sanity. When he was a year there the personnel of the medical staff was changed, and he procured an interview with the superintendent, through whose efforts, three months later, he was given his freedom.

Nearly fifteen months had he been in that living tomb—months which were fated to turn him out on the sea of life with none of the equipment necessary to bring him to port safely and well. For he had never once allowed himself to think of what he would do should his deliverance come. One thing alone he thought of, and in the hour when he realized it he awakened to the startling consciousness that he was wholly unfit to use it. What could a man do in the world with a little undigested

A SON OF HOLLAND

philosophy and a smattering of French and Latin? The question made him tremble between hope and doubt, for there was even cruelty in the new change that had come to him and he so unprepared.

The words that Father Cyril so often spoke returned to mock him and to embitter his heart—for were they not prophetic? Was it not true that the lust of gold made men hate each other, and the passion for preferment made a brother kill a brother? And was it not true that only within the sacred sanctum of a cloister could men reach the full fruition of life?

“I was foolish enough,” he said, “to long for the peace and safety of the old French abbey, and I reproached myself for my ingratitude and indifference to the warning words that had been spoken to me. There was hate in my heart, too, and I was impatient for the day to come when I could take revenge on the man who had

THE BROKEN TRAIL

spoiled my life." There was something eloquent in his flashing eyes as he bent forward with a dramatic gesture of his right hand and interrupted himself. "But he is dead now, and I carry no bitter thoughts against him: he died shortly after that, a bankrupt, having squandered my money and his own. All that was left to me when I came of age were a few relics of our family history.

"I went to the Hague and entered the police service as a special detective, and I was afterward promoted to be assistant secretary to the Metropolitan Commissioner. Of course, I still hoped to be able to make my way to the university. It was now over two years since I saw my friend at Amsterdam, so I asked leave of absence and remained with him for a week. For the first time in my life I was seized with a passion, of which previously I had been as ignorant as a child, the pure passion of

A SON OF HOLLAND

a man for a woman, my friend's sister. But I struggled to conceal it, and contented myself with assuring him of my eternal gratitude for the visit he paid me to the abbey, which brought me back to the world before I had time to renounce it."

As the weeks passed he was surprised to realize how completely this young woman had entered into his life, so that there was naught else now that he cared for. This was a sudden shock to one who had been born, it seemed, with a heart longing after something that could never be satisfied in this world, nor in the next. It was not love he was seeking for, at least not the love of a woman. For had he not been among men who either knew nothing of it or had renounced it?

Study without seclusion, sympathy without sentiment, these were his ideals. So it was that after fruitless analysis he had unconsciously stumbled upon it. He won-

THE BROKEN TRAIL

dered if other men were born into the kingdom of love with an impulse so sudden and so satisfying. But there was one thing he had forgotten to reckon with in the first flush of his new-found joy, and when it dawned upon him it made him fear that he had nursed a delusion. For was she not the daughter of a wealthy merchant whose name was woven into the political life of the Netherlands? And he—what was he, a commissioner's clerk, the stigma of the asylum on his name, disfranchised of the right to his inheritance, with neither an education in the university nor a commission in the army, that he should seek to unite her fortune with his own?

With such thoughts as these he braved the intervening months until his return to Amsterdam at the festive season in mid-winter.

At her home the *élite* of the city and of

A SON OF HOLLAND

the capital had gathered to attend the coming-of-age festivities of her brother. She, however, was the focus for most comment and admiration, as it was whispered that she would be a probable debutante at the next season's levee. This, doubtless, added a charm and interest to her personality more than to any other, so that when the week's rejoicings were over she emerged with a triumph all her own. To him, however, it only brought out in sharper contrast the difference between their social positions, and taunted him with the madness of striving to claim her for himself. Next season she would be seen in a more dazzling light, and in the brilliant dreams which floated before his half-closed eyes he saw her admired and loved by the rich and high-born who lived, for the most part, in the shadow of the throne.

So he argued with himself until the very eve of his departure for home. The

THE BROKEN TRAIL

guests had left the house, and he was invited to go with the family to a presentation of "Romeo and Juliet" at the Royal Theatre. Breathless, impatient, struggling to control himself, he sat through the play. Stage scenery, electrical effects, the mad lovers, they were all real to him, for its blind passion had smitten his heart. Was he not Romeo, and she that sat in front of him, the cynosure of many eyes, was she not Juliet? And he, why should he not go with his Juliet to some place where human feet had never trod? Thus did he think without reason all the way home—for love never reasons.

On the piazza, overlooking the sea, they two were standing watching the dull lights along the canal, half-hidden by the low-lying mist. For a little he was too absorbed with his thoughts and the visions of his future and hers that the play had inspired to notice the good fortune that had

A SON OF HOLLAND

come to him in being alone with her under such opportune circumstances. At last he became conscious of the long-drawn silence, and seemed to recollect her presence at his side. His heart was beating fast, and he strode across to the farther side fearing she might discover his embarrassment.

He glanced at her to see the expression on her face before he might venture to speak. She was standing with her head against the stone pillar, and the high collar of her cloak almost hid her face from his view. He caught the swift movement of her eyes as he passed, and his keen intuition, upon which he prided himself so much, assured him that between them there was sympathy at least. He glanced at her again as though to say something, when she turned around and said gravely, "You are thinking of returning to-morrow?"

"Yes," he answered quickly. "You

THE BROKEN TRAIL

have contributed much to my happiness, everything indeed, since I came here. It makes it so difficult to go back—very difficult.”

She lifted her eyes and met his in a manner that indicated to his quick perception what was passing in her mind. “I am glad if I have done anything to make you happy. I might have done more.”

“More?” he replied, as he moved a step toward her, “you could not have been more to me.”

The sudden transition of the thought made her start and turn her head towards the shimmering haze in the distance. He noticed the changed expression on her face, and for a few minutes watched her in silence.

“There is nothing I wish to hide from you,” he continued, and he grew almost impatient with himself at the hesitancy of



"He moved a step toward her."

Page 44.



A SON OF HOLLAND

his speech and the difficulty he had to interpret vocally the burning thoughts of his heart—"nothing which you should not know. I have had more misfortunes in my life than most men of my years—parents dead, property gone, one year of my life spent in an asylum—enough to break my heart and spoil my life and make me hate the world. But you—you can make me happy, and you alone." Again he waited, half perplexed at her silent attitude.

After a short pause she turned around, took a sharp glance at him as though about to speak, and, closing her eyes, covered them with her hand.

"Another may bring you wealth, and you are worthy of it, title, even, but not the love that I bring you. And only love creates happiness. Speak, Isobel. I have nothing else to offer you, nothing but myself."

THE BROKEN TRAIL

She opened her eyes, illuminated with the fire that his love had kindled in her heart, looked at him, her face beaming with joy, and threw out her arms in answer. It was not a moment for words.

Next day, and an hour before his departure for home, he sought an audience of her father, and told him what had happened the night before. In a moment he found himself separated from her by an absolute refusal on the father's part to consent to the betrothal of his daughter. His sullen, prohibitory attitude struck him dumb for the moment. Had the shock come to him even in his normal condition it would have been tremendous. He struggled to regain the composure and reliance which had characterized him in the many tragic situations of his life.

"And your objection to me is—?"

"Because you have neither position nor money; and, moreover, we have received

A SON OF HOLLAND

you simply for our son's sake—that is the reason for your presence here.”

“That is a hard thing to say to one who has done nothing to merit it. You have spoken in haste, and you may think better about it some day. If I have neither position nor money left to me now I have character, and that is worth something.”

“A commissioner's clerk,” he retorted, with scorn in his voice, as he rose to his feet. “It can never be.”

“Then what do you wish me to be?”

“I have no wish whatever in the matter, sir,” he replied; “no wish whatever. It is impudent for you, a nondescript, to approach me in this way. Had you been in a profession, or had a commission in the army, it might be different, but—” and he broke off with a quick movement of his arms.

“Then I shall seek a commission in the army—anything for her.”

THE BROKEN TRAIL

“There is no use to speak of this, Mr. Wolfendon, words are useless. But I do not forget you are my guest meantime. There is only one thing I ask you, that when you return home you will not communicate with her in any way—not for six months.”

Without waiting for more he bowed and left the room. It was natural that for a few minutes he should feel that he had been subjected to a humiliation to which no man could submit without sacrificing his own individuality. But as sacrifice is the true test of love, he gladly accepted it, feeling, at the same time, more and more strongly bound to the girl for whom the sacrifice was to be made.

Six months. The longer he thought of it the more his gratitude increased, for her father was said to be one of the proudest and most exclusive men in Amsterdam; and the more fully, too, he realized that

A SON OF HOLLAND

the conditions her father had imposed were in the nature of a compromise to his initial attitude, and that he had really achieved something akin to a triumph.

Almost simultaneously with his return home, however, he received a communication from her father extending the time limit so indefinitely as to ultimately destroy his hopes of ever seeing her again. He stood for a little, trying to minimize the meaning of the plain words on the note-paper, hesitating, doubting, until he was thrown into a state of excitement which bordered on distraction.

He could not trust himself to act rightly, for he was dizzy and confused, and the sharp, stinging pain in his temples made concentration impossible, and almost drove him mad. What had he done in his life to merit such cruelty and deception? Not once, indeed, although once was enough to sweep away the foundations of faith and

THE BROKEN TRAIL

goodness, not once—how many times, he asked himself. One—two—three—four times, it seemed as if he need expect nothing else but deception and disappointment, and as regularly as the seasons.

Forthwith he returned to Amsterdam, hardly aware that he had reached her home, or even how he had got there. The sight of the piazza where a few nights before he had plighted her love was a source of new strength to him, and he began to regain his self-possession.

It was impossible, he assured himself again and again, that a love so spontaneous and natural could have brought about such a catastrophe in so short a time. So he stood still, satisfying himself that, so far as she was concerned, he had been mistaken, and feeling the more able to meet her father if he made the approach possible.

How long he stood there he did not know, when the sound of her father's voice,

A SON OF HOLLAND

which he recognized by its nasal tones, arrested him suddenly as he mounted the doorstep.

"In heaven's name, where are you going?"

"To your home, sir, I hope," he tried to say, courageously; "if I may be allowed to speak with her for a little."

"Ah, that is it, and in spite of what I wrote you. No, no, it is useless to speak of this; there is that between you and her which makes it impossible—impossible!"

"But if I may only see her," he pleaded, hardly able to control the rising passion that formed like a lump in his throat, "for the last time, if it must be so."

"The last time it shall be, and only for a few minutes," her father answered reluctantly, as he allowed him to pass into the hall.

On the stairway she was standing, hold-

THE BROKEN TRAIL

ing a handkerchief to her eyes, her face pale with distress.

“What is it?” he asked. “Tell me. If you will tell me what has happened, perhaps—”

She shook her head in silence, and the struggle she was making to subdue the storm in her soul checked his speech.

“Tell me,” he repeated, as he put out his hands and touched hers. “You know I love you. Tell me, even if it were to cost me my life . . . Speak, Isobel . . . you have not changed towards me?”

“Oh, no, no, I love you with all my heart . . . but—”

He waited breathlessly, scarcely daring to interpret what she had left unexpressed. The suspense was too great to bear. It almost drove him frantic.

“But—”

A SON OF HOLLAND

"But," she sighed, and gently withdrew her hand, "it is best that we part."

For a moment the ground reeled beneath his feet, and a piercing cry came from his heart, "My God, must it be so!" He threw out his hands to the wall to keep himself from falling. "God bless you, dear. If it must be that we part forever, then in Heaven above may He perfect our love." He looked for the last time into her face, and staggered blindly along the corridor into the darkness outside.

As a man, struggling for life in the sea, remembers with frightful vividness the events of his life far back in the remote past, so in that brief and terrible moment when the foundations were swept away his memory returned to unfold the tragic history of his short life. It were folly to be in a world in which there was no reality, and where all men and women were liars. Why should he live on when everything ended in

THE BROKEN TRAIL

the same old way? Still another vision from the past came before him like a grim spectre, mocking him to scorn and despair. He saw the abbey, and the little room in the dormitory where he slept and studied and received the visitations of Father Cyril. And, oh! how the prophetic words he had so often heard in the cloisters gnawed at his brain now with an unceasing pain. Almost before he knew it, he began to idealize the life of penance and prayer and renunciation. But no, it was a delusion, the worship of an idea, a dream from beginning to end.

The sound of the bells in the city, calling the faithful to prayer, sounded clear and strong through the frosty air. But so absorbed was he in his thoughts that even this would have passed unheeded had he not chanced to see the shadowy outline of the old cathedral pinnaced against the sky. The vanity of men, he thought, as the

A SON OF HOLLAND

chiming ceased—it could be nothing else but vanity that made men spend so much money for the perpetuation of a delusion. Thus it was that with one mighty stroke the foundations were swept away—friends, love, faith, heaven, all were gone, and, like a wandering star, he passed, aimlessly and purposelessly, from darkness to darkness.

One day, however, he found himself among a shipload of emigrants—blunt-faced Poles, heavy-eyed Jews, strong, well-built Swedes, Russians with salt herring tied up in red napkins, with a leaven of his own countrymen—seeking the broad, free acres of the modern Mecca in the West.

These men and women coming to us, so different in language, customs and ideals, constitute one of the most serious of our national problems. But the initial, experimental stage has already passed, and the immigrants from the northern countries of

THE BROKEN TRAIL

Europe have so readily adapted themselves to our conditions, and so easily assimilated our ideas, that we have nowhere in the empire a more contented, thrifty and patriotic people, and none more worthy of the privileges of citizenship.

On the other hand, we have to reckon with a very grave peril in receiving the ignorant and inefficient—the lazzaroni from the slums of Southern Europe, born to be seekers for a soft job, preferring to extort money rather than to work for it, and forever sowing the seeds of anarchy and moral degeneracy, and who breed crime, disease and death wherever they go. In the United States, though not so much in Canada as yet, through their Maffia and Camorra they have become a menace to the public peace and safety.

He began to ask his senses how he got on board the ship, for it was all so sudden that he seemed to be in a stupor and could

A SON OF HOLLAND

not rightly tell. He stood apart as the night was beginning to fall, gazing at the lights along the shore, while the vessel moved like a great shadow out to sea.

A strong impulse came over him to bury in the deep anything that would remind him of the land he had left. So he hurried to the cabin to search his trunk, and, returning to the gunwale, dropped overboard one thing and another, exclaiming, as the last light disappeared from view, "Forever, forever, forever!"

Scarcely, however, had he set foot on the edge of the New World when, by a self-contradiction common to temperaments like his, his memory was restored—the opera house, the piazza, the face that shone like a star—and it sent a fire through his tortured brain. Ah, he would have loved her had she been born in a fisherman's hut on the seacoast. Would God that it had been so! He was startled

THE BROKEN TRAIL

as by an apparition—so vivid did it seem—for had he not buried it all in the grave somewhere in the broad Atlantic?

It was madness, he knew, to give way to it, when only a few days before he had destroyed so completely, so ruthlessly, so scornfully, everything that would be in any way a medium of remembrance to his senses. Everything—ah, the folly of it! There are some things in life as indestructible as life itself, and as he realized it, like one suddenly awakening from a dream to the bitter consciousness of the reality, he cursed himself again and again for being a wretched, tormented, self-deceived man.

What happened immediately after that he could not tell. Not that he had forgotten, but rather that he could not trust himself to bear the pain that such recollections would inevitably bring. For by this time his fingers were moving nervously,

A SON OF HOLLAND

there was a wearied look in his eyes, and the colour came and went rapidly in his face. Then, as if I were to assume that nearly a year had elapsed—just as one would measure time in the acts of a tragedy—he transferred the last scene to the far away Northland where he was a member of the North-West Mounted Police detachment on the shores of the Great Slave Lake. He had drifted there, somehow or other, like a lone leaf from the foliage of a continent, and for three years lay buried in the seclusion of the ice-bound and untrodden wastes. That was what he craved for—not the romance of adventure forever associated with a policeman's life at an outpost within the shadow of the Arctic circle, but the primitive silence and solitude of a country where he would not be compelled to walk in the ruts made by the feet of selfish and avaricious men.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

When an Algonquin Indian is in deep trouble he seeks the summit of a mountain, or a lonely spot in some tableland, where, dumb and mute, he appeals to the Great Spirit to be made more brave and more courageous. And no man, whether he be primitive or civilized, can fail to be stronger in heart and nobler in thought, even against his will, once he has pitched his tent in the wilderness.

So it was that, gradually and unconsciously, he was brought back to a sense of the harmony of life and things and the infinite love behind all phenomena. And then that memorable night by the camp-fire in the heart of a boundless forest—it was that which brought him to this fateful hour in my study. A thought, a vision, came to him, swift and sure, like a lightning-flash across the black horizon, and begat from that moment an imperishable hope that somehow he would yet meet her

A SON OF HOLLAND

for whom he had hungered dumbly through these years.

His tale was ended. He relaxed the tension on his body and sank back on the couch a little exhausted.

He loved her—no man ever loved a woman more—with a true, passionate love, and Isobel loved him. But what of her father? The omission of his name brought me back to present considerations. “Have you forgotten the most important factor in the situation, to-day as yesterday—her father?” I asked.

He stared for a moment. “Dead—I feel he is dead!” The answer was given with the authority of one who had psychological insight into the hidden things. A hard, determined look stole over his features. “If she’s alive I must see her,” he continued, and rose to his feet as if anxious to get at the truth without delay. “And if she is dead, then—”

THE BROKEN TRAIL

He was silent. There was that in his face which could not be expressed in words.

"But if she is married?" I said, with some reticence, fearing that in his disturbed condition he had blinded himself to this alternative.

"Married!" he cried in renewed anxiety, as he turned his flashing eyes on me, "It is impossible!"

He shut his eyes as if he were revolving in his mind the possible truth of what I had enunciated, then drawing his hand across his brow, he burst out in strong, clear tones: "I pray God to spare me that."

"Then you are going back to Holland? It is very wonderful—a modern Ulysses—but how do you intend to get there?"

"By my feet," was the laconic answer.

I could hardly suppress a laugh at the obvious ambiguity, and almost unawares

A SON OF HOLLAND

I realized I was looking at them somewhat curiously.

“You propose to walk across a continent. And there is the ocean, too. Why, sir, I hope you have counted the cost?”

He shook his head with the indifference of a man whose mind is already too pre-occupied with a great thought to think of anything trivial.

For some minutes neither of us spoke. I felt I could not let him go from my study on a journey fraught with so much danger at that time of the year without unfolding to him some eventualities that might arise. So I began, cautiously, indeed, and yet determined to state the possibilities of the case as strongly as possible.

“You are aware, I hope, that you are just as liable to be frozen to death in the attempt, even to reach Winnipeg, as if you were making a dash for the North Pole? It seems to me to be sheer folly to stake

THE BROKEN TRAIL

your life on such slender chances, and all the odds against you. Just think, sir—”

“Perhaps so,” he interrupted in dismay—“perhaps so, but I dare not think of it.” He raised his hand to his throbbing temples and looked wistfully out at the window.

“I am sorry that my words have caused you pain. But I do not wish to ignore the facts for the sake of sentiment.”

It was useless to speak further. He was willing to stake his all on one throw of the dice, like a man who, having lost his last cent, takes the jewelled pin from his scarf and the ring from his finger and throws them down on the green table.

“What can I do for you then, Mr. Wolfendon?”

He sat down and took a letter from his pocket. “Would you write to her—just a few words? Tell her you have seen me, and that I have kept my faith.”

A SON OF HOLLAND

He tore open the envelope and read the writing to me.

“This,” he continued, “is what I wrote after church on Sunday evening—the first in four years. Will you send yours with it?”

“This is a somewhat delicate matter,” I replied, wondering for a minute how to meet the situation; “but I believe in your sincerity and moral earnestness. Come back in an hour or two and I shall have a letter ready for you.”

When he returned in the afternoon I read it to him and sealed the envelope. He leaned back on the couch and looked at it intently. Then his eyes grew moist, and, as he spoke, his voice quivered. “Now I can go back to Holland with some hope. I am sorry I have given you so much trouble, but I am very, very grateful.”

He wrapped my letter with his own in a

THE BROKEN TRAIL

piece of white paper and put them into his pocket, then rose to his feet. "I shall start for Winnipeg at once," he said. "The Dutch Consul was a friend of my father's. He may help me to reach New York, then it will be easy to get to Holland."

I felt as if I were parting with a friend whom I had known for years and years. His was the faithfulness and heroism of a man of strong purpose and pure desire. The soft light of the winter's afternoon, streaming through the colored glass, threw around his broad shoulders a mantle of gold and emerald. A strange new fervor glowed in his eyes, and in an instant he was changed. No—not he. It was I who saw with clearer vision. The strangeness and mysticism that surrounded his personality on Christmas eve were gone.

"Good-bye, sir," he said, grasping my hand firmly, "I must go." He faltered

A SON OF HOLLAND

for a moment and bowed his head sadly. "Life has been hard for me, and the fates have not been kind. Perhaps—"

"No, no, not fate, my brother; it is God who rules; nothing comes by chance."

"Good-bye," he said, again pressing my hand in his, and the moisture still in his eyes. "It seems so hard to speak."

"It seems so," I answered, for he had just uttered what was in my mind—not because there was nothing to express, but because the expression could not be found. "But this I can say, Wilbur—take Christ with you. He is the young man's friend. He was a young man Himself. He died when He was thirty-three." He drew away his hand and tried hard to master the rising emotion. I waited in silence. "Wilbur, take Him with you."

He held out his hand and there was a strangely earnest look on his noble face. "I know, I know," he repeated, in broken

THE BROKEN TRAIL

accents; "I am satisfied." Over his little world the light was breaking. He had seen the star.

"Good-bye, my friend, good-bye. Be thou faithful unto death. And in the words of Shelley—

'The one remains; the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines.
Earth's shadows fly.
Time, like a dome of many-coloured glass.
Stains the white radiance of eternity.'"

He passed out and was gone. It was all like a dream. For the nonce a strange sickness came over my soul. I was like one wandering in a dark place. Life and its problems visualized before me, unchanged and unsolved, as in the old days when we talked together, Henry and I, in the bird-haunted walks of Cobourg town. Henry—he is gone

"Where there is no more snow, and no wandering feet—and no dark."

A SON OF HOLLAND

Ah, me! I know it now; in the after-light. There is no illusion at all. It is all reality—the glorious consciousness of the reality when the dream is over. “We rest on the infinite bosom of God; we dream that all is wrong, to wake and find that all is right.” It is Christ himself who comes to me and puts His hand upon my heart, unlocks the door, and solves the problem.

“So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on
O’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone.”

While I was thus soliloquizing, a note with the headline of the Arlington Hotel was handed in:

CALGARY, December 26th, 1908.

“Dear Sir:—

“Within a few hours I will start for my long walk to Winnipeg. Most likely I will never have the pleasure of seeing you again.

“In connection with my interview to-day, I beg of you to accept the gratitude I feel towards you. I also wish to convey to you my regret

THE BROKEN TRAIL

for having troubled you so much. I beg you to forgive me.

"I have prayed the Lord Almighty to stand by me in my struggles, to save and guard the happiness of one for whom I would be willing to die.

"Thanking you once more for your kindness, through which you have made me your debtor, I remain,

"Sincerely yours,

"WILBUR WOLFENDON."

The weeks went by, and many times I thought of the brave young Hollander on his long walk eastward. Meanwhile, a cold wave came over the West, and the thermometer fell to thirty degrees below zero. Would Wilbur ever reach Winnipeg? Every day I scanned the newspapers, fearful lest a man bearing his name had been frozen to death on the track.

Three weeks, and the cold spell was broken by the warm, sweet days that betokened the approach of spring, for

A SON OF HOLLAND

spring comes early to the West. Hope grew in my heart for my friend's safety and ultimate triumph.

In the meantime word came from Amsterdam—from Isobel—and there was a note for Wilbur enclosed with it. Wilbur—what would he say now? Oh, the triumph of love!—the words burst spontaneously upon my heart.

Her father was dead—how strange that he should have felt this that night by the camp-fire—her brother was married at the Hague, and she, in the old home in Amsterdam, was pining her life away.

“Send him back to me. I may not have long to live. Only give me the joy of seeing him again. Tell him he must come quickly.”

I wrote at once to the Dutch Consul in Winnipeg, craving him to make inquiries without delay, for there was no time to

THE BROKEN TRAIL

lose. The tragic pathos and urgency of her letter demanded immediate action.

Delay ensued—days, weeks of unbearable suspense and silence—and the chagrin of disappointment was piercing my soul like a sharp sword. Could it be that death, and not love, had triumphed?

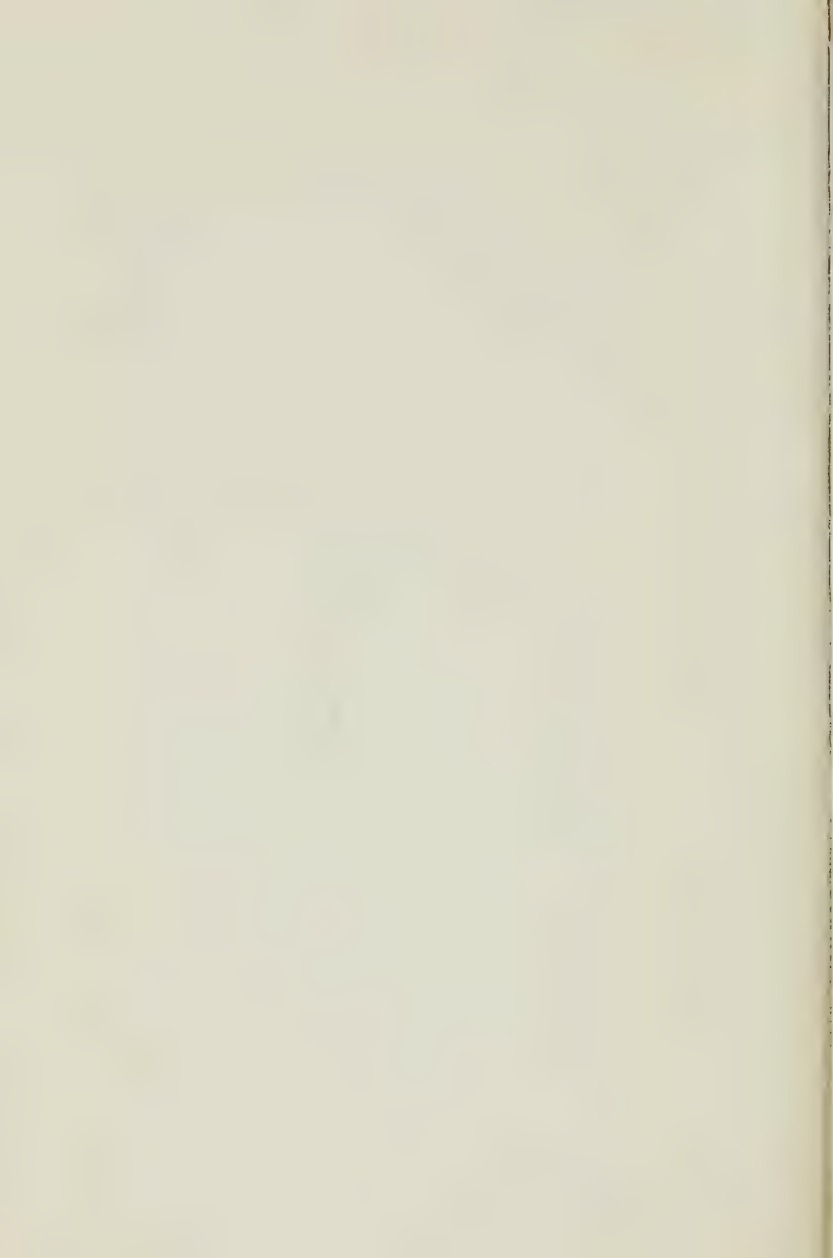
It was at that moment—so beautifully expressed by Watts in his immortal picture in the National Gallery—when man is always saying farewell, and yet hope forever lingers, that a letter came from Wilbur Wolfendon in his own handwriting. He had reached Winnipeg. He could not chronicle all he had endured, those eight hundred miles over snow and ice. But amid all the experiences of that memorable journey he never lost heart. Had I heard from Isobel?

The story of the young Hollander who was walking across a continent to meet his love appeared in the press, although the



Eight hundred miles across a continent to win a bride.

Page 72.



A SON OF HOLLAND

details differed somewhat from those related in my study. It enlisted the sympathy and interest of the citizens of that city, and money was immediately subscribed to enable him to finish his journey to Holland.

I sent him a brief message, enclosing Isobel's letter, and a few words expressing my admiration for his heroism, and the assurance that he would some day come to his own.

In her home in the old cathedral town by the grey sea, Isobel awaited the hour of her lover's homecoming. From her bedroom window at night she could see the glimmer of the lights far out at sea, and hear the cries of the wild sea-mew, making the more weird and desolate her little empty world. Through these hungry years she could never look at the stars sending their silvery shafts into the dark waves

THE BROKEN TRAIL

without a flood of tears. For they seemed to point the way to some lone land beyond, where all her light and fullness lay. But it was different now.

Isobel held in her hands the cablegram that he sent her, and repeated the words to herself, half-speaking, half-chanting, "Sailing at once. Live for me."

He was coming back to her—to home. And summer was coming, too. Oh, what joy was hers! She would meet him when the birds were singing and the lawn and the hedgeways were ablaze with scarlet and gold. A sweet spirit brooded over her dreams. A new hope filled her soul. She would live, please God, and they would work together through the years—for there was much to do—Wilbur and she.

THE DESPERADO

I bear a charmed life.

—*Shakespeare.*

The more we see of events, the less we come to believe in any fate or destiny except character.

—*Phillips Brooks.*

Here's the smell of blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

—*Shakespeare.*

Every one is the son of his own works.

—*Cervantes.*

We find in life exactly what we put into it.

—*Emerson.*

THE DESPERADO

THE court-room was crowded. The trial for murder, which had lasted several days, was now closing. The prisoner watched the proceedings of the case with apparent interest, and laughed at times when his counsel engaged in repartee or witticism.

He was young—so young to be on trial for his life. As I saw him for the first time, with his deep-set eyes fixed for the most part on the man who would ultimately pronounce his doom or deliverance, and his arms resting on the edge of the dock, he seemed to be in his teens; such a youth, indeed, as one would expect to find on the farm, dreaming the dreams of youth, and with never a care nor sorrow. He was of medium height, and carried his head well, although his shoulders were rounded and drooped somewhat. His eyes were grey and keen, but without expression; his

THE BROKEN TRAIL

features were small and regular; his hair was dark and unkempt; he was dressed in shabby black.

For the first time since his arraignment, he showed signs of nervousness as the judge began to address the jury. He bit his lower lip and a quiver of fear passed over him. His face, hitherto pale and rigid, coloured deeply, and his head dropped on his chest. As the last words in a chain of damaging evidence were spoken, the colour passed away, and a pallor, deadlier than before, revealed the tumult of his soul within.

The prisoner threw his head backward and rolled his eyes from right to left. It was a terrible moment. He seemed to be struggling with rising hysteria. Every muscle was drawn into tension. A gloom settled on his face, and deep furrows appeared on his forehead, as if ploughed by a

THE DESPERADO

sickening pain. But it was only for a moment.

Thirty-five minutes later the jury returned to give their verdict. A silence, so dead that a pinfall could have been heard, fell on the gaping crowd. A minute later the prisoner followed with quick and steady step and took his seat in the dock. With piercing eye he scanned deliberately each member of the jury, and with an audible sigh he gripped the side of the box and sat down.

“Gentlemen of the jury, state through your foreman if you have arrived at a verdict.”

“We have.”

“Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?”

“Guilty, sir,” was the quiet answer.

The silence that followed was more potent than the speech. The prisoner straightened himself up in an almost in-

THE BROKEN TRAIL

different attitude, and passed his hand slowly over his forehead. Another minute of silence deeper than before, and the judge in solemn tones of quiet authority said,

“Stand up.”

For the moment his lips trembled more than once, but he maintained the same sad composure.

“How old are you?”

“Twenty-one, sir,” he replied, in a firm voice.

“Where were you born?”

“Kansas, sir.”

“Are you married or unmarried?”

“Unmarried, sir.”

“Are you temperate or intemperate?”

“Intemperate, sir.”

“What did you say?”

“Intemperate, sir.”

“Have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon you?”

THE DESPERADO

“Nothing,” he answered quietly and unhesitatingly; “only I ain’t guilty.”

The judge told the prisoner that he had been accorded a fair and impartial trial, and he could not see how with the evidence before them the jury could have reached any other conclusion than they had. Besides, the prisoner had shown by his treatment of people who had given him every kindness that he was capable of any crime, and had committed many. “It only remains for me,” he continued in slow, steady tones, “to confer upon you the penalty which the law prescribes, and that is, that you be taken from here to the jail whence you came, and on December the fifteenth you are to be hanged by the neck until you are dead—and may God have mercy on your soul.”

The prisoner bowed and sat down. There was not a trace of emotion visible. Deeper and deeper sank the silence. He

THE BROKEN TRAIL

arose impassively and held out his hands to be bound with irons. Then with quickened and measured step he passed out to his doom.

A pang of unutterable sorrow swept over me. Doomed to die, and he so young! The strange stillness that brooded over that autumn afternoon seemed to make his approaching death the more ghastly and appalling. In her home one hundred miles away was his mother, bowed down to the grave. I hurried out of the court-room into the street below, just in time to see the prisoner mounting the double-seated carriage, guarded on the right and the left.

It was now six o'clock. Without a moment's delay I hastened to the place of confinement, in the hope that I might be of some service to him in an hour that he needed it most. The entrance lay through a wicket-gate, where I presented my credentials. I was then admitted to the

THE DESPERADO

guard-room, in the centre of which was the prisoner's cell.

It was dark, quite dark, in that small iron-barred cage. The guards—for there were two of them outside—watched my approach in silence.

“I have come to see you, sir,” I said, stretching my hand through the bars. “Perhaps I can be of some help and comfort to you.”

He shook hands heartily and stepped back a pace or two. “Glad you’ve come to see me,” he replied, in brusque, guttural tones, and with a somewhat indifferent air. There was a peculiar emphasis and inflexion on the personal pronoun.

“We are sent into this world, you know, to make life less difficult for each other.”

“Guess that’s so,” he said, and shrugged his shoulders.

“What kind of a chance, my boy, have you had in life?”

THE BROKEN TRAIL

He was silent.

"You know," I continued, "your position is very serious. Have you had any chance in life?"

He gripped the iron bar with his right hand as if trying to suppress for a moment a rising emotion. He looked up at me and a shadow seemed to creep over his face. There was pain in his eyes.

"Yes," he began, falteringly, "I've had a good chance, sir, and a good mother, too."

"We all owe much to mother," I said. "Some of us owe everything. Where did you get off the track?"

"When I wanted to be my own boss and have my own way."

"How old were you when you left home?"

"I was just fourteen. I was brought up in my early boyhood to go to Sunday-school and church, and when I was four-

THE DESPERADO

teen I ran away from home, and I've been running away ever since."

Then followed the story of the intervening years, told in Western dialect, and of his first imprisonment, for a paltry offence, with thugs and thieves in the State of Illinois, where he received his first impetus to a wild and criminal life in the farther West.

I questioned him closely as to how much he knew of life when he left home. He was a boy just like other boys of his age, with new surprises bursting daily upon his awakening consciousness, making him unsteady and mercurial like the fitful shadows that chase themselves across the sea. And I do not hesitate to assert that Ernest —— would never have had the sentence of death passed upon him had he not been incarcerated in a prison at fifteen. That a youth should have been made a criminal, rather than a citizen, by being

THE BROKEN TRAIL

immured in a common jail, is surely a terrible indictment of the present penal system.

Immediately after his release he joined a gang of desperadoes, some of whom had been his associates during his imprisonment. For six years they roamed the Western States, a band of outlaws, holding up people at the point of the revolver, and all the while living, as he said, a charmed life.

Along the corridors the prisoners, with their faces against the bars, were straining their necks to catch the tale of his adventures. He spoke with as much composure as if we were sitting around a camp-fire at an evening meal. Could it be that even at this moment he was thinking he might again escape the penalty of his crime? Had he not broken jail before? Had he not evaded the posse a hundred times, even when he felt their hot breath on his cheek?

THE DESPERADO

“And you never once thought that defeat would come to you some day?”

“Defeat?” he replied, with an air of bravado. “We fellows never buck at nothing.”

A grim smile came over the faces of the guards, as if to remind him that he was now under a much stricter surveillance. He cast a swift glance at them from under his eyebrows, and sat down on the bench at the end of the cell. Just at that moment his brother appeared in the guard-room, and the cheerful manner in which they greeted each other struck me with astonishment.

The brother was a little taller and somewhat older, and might be distinguished from Ernest by his quiet and unobtrusive demeanor. For some years he had been in the service of the United States Government, and had arrived just in time to hear the judge give the charge to the jury.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

They stood so closely against the bars that their lips almost touched. For a few minutes they conversed under their breath, and although I had gone back but a few feet, I did not hear a syllable. Occasionally I thought I saw on Ernest's face a pained and anxious expression. He was listening, almost straining to hear, and the movement of his brother's lips indicated serious and rapid speech.

I stepped forward to say good night. The brother, his face more coloured than when he entered, took a firm grip of my hand and expressed his thanks for the visit.

During the four weeks that followed I saw the condemned man almost daily. At no time did he ever show a sign of grief or despondency. Indeed, as the days went by he grew more indifferent to the seriousness of his position, and would chat with much pride about his escapades on the great plains of the Western States.

THE DESPERADO

Meanwhile, his lawyer had applied for the issue of a new trial, and ultimately went to Ottawa to make personal representations to the department of justice.

The prisoner never ceased to reiterate his belief that a new trial would be granted, and to express confidence in the ability of his lawyer to regain him his freedom. At that moment it seemed as if this was the only hope that was left to him, and he clung to it as a shipwrecked sailor clings to a floating spar. There was something almost heroic in the patience with which he endured the suspense of waiting, when life was measured out by days and the shadow was already on the dial.

One afternoon about four o'clock I found him more excited than usual. He was in a corner of the cell, with his head resting on his right hand. In the other corner was the death-watch, and I sat down

THE BROKEN TRAIL

between them. He showed very little interest in my coming, and would sometimes walk up and down at a short and rapid pace. For a while I was impressed with the thought that the hope he had cherished had been shattered at last, and yet I had a strange intuition—the more, too, as I watched the changing aspect of his face and the strained and sullen expression of his eyes—that some new situation had arisen, so secret and so absorbing as to preclude even the common courtesies which he had extended to me at other times.

Half an hour later his brother came in, and putting his hands high up on the bars, spoke to him many cheering words.

“Any message from Ottawa?” I said to him.

“No,” he replied, “but I am sure we will hear of a new trial any minute.”

It was five o'clock when I left the cell, and following me came the death-watch,

THE DESPERADO

who was to be relieved by another constable already waiting outside. This meant, of course, that the attention of the other two guards was diverted for a moment to us. As I was passing through the outer guard-room I overheard him say to his brother :

“ Cheer up, old boy, there’s sure to be good news to-night from Ottawa.”

They were still standing in the same position, their arms high above their heads, touching the bars, and talking in low, deep tones, when the door closed behind me.

By this time, as it was getting dark, the guards turned on the lights and began to finish their duties prior to the arrival of the night-guard.

At six o’clock, as was the custom, the officer in charge ordered the prisoner to the adjoining room. He walked out, accompanied by the death-watch, and sat on a bench in front of a barred window facing

THE BROKEN TRAIL

the street, while the third constable remained in the outer guard-room. Thereupon the officer entered the cell, and, being satisfied that nothing had been left during the day, came to the door and said to the prisoner peremptorily, "All right."

Immediately the prisoner walked towards the door, and then stepped back, as if to allow the officer to pass out. As he did so he turned round quickly and flashed two revolvers in the faces of the two men.

"Make no move, or I'll blow your brains out!"

There was a calmness and deliberation about his attitude that made the threat the more startling. He took three steps backwards and got the constable in the outer guard-room in line with the weapon in his left hand.

"Throw down your arms," he shouted, "and make no move toward that alarm bell; I'm a desperate man!"



"Throw down your arms," he shouted, . . . "I'm a
desperate man." *Page 92.*

THE DESPERADO

Then he ordered the three men into his cell, and demanded the revolvers and cartridge belts which two of them carried. Securing these, he locked the cell door and walked in his heavy shackles to the place where the keys were kept, and unfastened his feet.

His face was white as death. "I'm a desperate man fighting for my life," he said, "and nothing is going to stop me."

He went up to the cell and, taunting the imprisoned guards, kissed his hand to them. "Good-bye, boys," he said, in a light-hearted manner, "there's a horse waiting for me outside."

All this took but a few moments, and so perfectly had his plans worked out, that before the arrival of the night-guards he had a lead of fifteen minutes in his race for life.

The news travelled from lip to lip, and in less than two hours the whole country

THE BROKEN TRAIL

was thrown into a state of panic. Without a moment's delay every man on the police force turned out mounted, and patrols were stationed at all bridges and trails leading from the city.

"Where was his brother?" people asked, "and was not the Methodist minister the last man in the cell with him?" Thus they talked in their excitement, and thus they debated. Ten minutes later his brother was arrested and charged with assisting him to escape. He had in his pocket a pair of oil-skin moccasins, which he said he was taking to the barracks, and in his other pocket some heavy calibre cartridges. On this charge he was afterwards brought up for trial, and the jury returned a verdict of guilty, to which they attached a strong recommendation for mercy.

The difficulty of tracing the fugitive was increased by a heavy snowstorm which had covered up his footprints about the hour of

THE DESPERADO

the escape. Every possible clue was followed up, and trains and conveyances leaving the city were minutely inspected by armed men in plain clothes.

Late that night he called at a rancher's home seven miles away, and asked shelter for the night. The rancher, seeing his pitiful condition, and as the night was cold and stormy, took him into his kitchen and gave him food and clothing.

During the absence of the rancher the next day, he returned to the place and took away, among other things, a suit of clothes and a military cloak.

About this time it was reported in town that a pony and saddle had been stolen. The day following the pony was seen making its way to the stable. The police traced its footmarks to a home sixteen miles out belonging to a respectable and well-known rancher. They inquired if the mur-

THE BROKEN TRAIL

derer had been there, and being assured that no one had seen him, they departed. However, it was proved beyond doubt that at that very moment he was hiding in a room upstairs.

It must be said, that about this time, there appeared in the press the account of a desperado in the State of Washington who had shot down people in cold blood for giving information to his pursuers regarding his whereabouts. This, no doubt, together with the threat he made when he entered, so terrified them that they were afraid under penalty of their lives to reveal his location. He had said: "Don't think I'm alone. I have my friends watching this house, and if you tell the police you will be shot down. I give you warning."

Indeed, as his desperate condition became recognized it haunted the whole community like a nightmare, and ranchers

THE DESPERADO

living in the outlying parts deserted their homes and came into the city.

Reports of people being held up in their homes gradually leaked out and were usually accredited. But in every case the information came too late to be of any service in locating his whereabouts.

Never was a community so terrorized into secrecy by an outlaw. A threatening letter, written by him on the notepaper of a local hotel, was posted to the foreman of the jury who had found him guilty of murder. Women became almost hysterical, and were even afraid to go from room to room in their homes when night fell. That he had visited the city under cover of darkness few doubted. This, at least, was certain, that for five weeks he was at no time out of sight of the place where the brother was confined, and from which he himself had made his memorable dash

THE BROKEN TRAIL

for liberty in the very shadow of the scaffold.

The police, so long baffled in their attempts to follow his movements, at last determined to surround the city with a cordon of mounted men. At this time the total strength of the local Royal North-West Mounted Police force numbered about fifteen, so that in order to carry out the plans effectively thirty men were sworn in for special service.

On Sunday morning, exactly forty-five days from the date of the escape, the police were all assembled in front of the barracks and divided into five groups. Each group was placed in command of an officer and apportioned to a particular section of the district.

It was one of those days that so often come to the West at this season of the year. The wind was blowing cold and strong from the north, and the ther-

THE DESPERADO

monometer had already fallen twenty-five degrees below freezing point.

At nine o'clock the police set out, carefully inspecting every nook and corner likely to afford him a hiding-place. It is told of a brave member of one party who set out that morning, that one day, on the outskirts of the city, while he was searching a coop full of fine Plymouth Rock hens, a goose suddenly squawked with a very loud voice. The brave young rifleman ran for shelter into the barn opposite, all the while unconscious that behind the door was the very man he had set out to find!

The detachment which went in a north-easterly direction came upon two houses within sight of each other, about five miles from the city. The force then divided and began to search both houses simultaneously. From the farther house a rider came galloping at full speed to

THE BROKEN TRAIL

report that he had found in a haystack a large hole containing food and bedding and a military cloak which corresponded to the one that had been stolen on the night of the escape.

Immediately it was concluded that they had tracked the murderer to the very door, although the two men living there denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. Indeed, there were indications that he had hurriedly taken refuge in the house on the first approach of the police. A constable entered and went down into the cellar, when he discovered in a corner a hole large enough to accommodate a man. It was so dark that nothing could be seen, and after procuring a lantern he returned holding it in front of him.

“Here’s where the —— must be,” he said, when he almost dashed the lantern into the face of a man. He jumped back hurriedly and cocked his revolver.

THE DESPERADO

“Who are you calling a ——?” a voice called out angrily, and grazing the constable’s ear whizzed a bullet and still another. The constable retraced his steps as quickly as possible, and following him came the fugitive, who fired a shot at the guard outside. They returned the fire with twelve shots from their carbines, one of which struck his heel, whereupon he retreated to the cellar.

It was decided to set the house on fire, for which purpose a bundle of hay was placed on either side. The posse gradually closed round on all sides, and with the butt of their rifles smashed the windows, as these were a menace to their own safety. By this time the fire was increasing, and dense clouds of smoke almost hid the house from view. When the flames were well under way another shot came from the cellar.

“My God!” cried the Inspector, “the

THE BROKEN TRAIL

man has committed suicide." But suspecting that it might only be an attempt to inveigle him into a trap he shouted, "If you are down there you had better come out."

"If I come out you will shoot me."

Much parleying ensued, and although the Inspector gave him his word of honour again and again that he would not be shot, still he refused to believe him.

"If I come up," he shouted again, "I will be hanged anyway."

"Your brother," the Inspector replied, "is in the guard-room. The least you can do is to say good-bye to him."

The fire was now beyond control.

"Boys," he called from the cellar, "I'm going to kill myself. You will find a letter on the floor to my mother. Come and get it before it is burned, and for God's sake put out the fire. I don't want to be roasted alive."



"A minute later he appeared with his hands over his head."

THE DESPERADO

“You have only a minute or two left to make your decision.”

“Promise you won’t shoot me, and I will come up.” A minute later he appeared with his hands over his head. “Boys, I don’t want to be hanged,” he said, “and I don’t want to kill any of you, but I guess I’ll have to give myself up. I’m sick of the whole business.”

He spoke freely to the members of the posse he knew, and expressed regret that one of the guards from whom he had escaped was sentenced to a year in the penitentiary.

“Boys, I’m sorry I was such a coward when B—— came down the cellar. I thought he was a civilian, and I’m sorry I did not take a piece out of his ear the same as he took out of my boot. I could have got away any time. It was dead easy. I jumped on the train two or three times as it was pulling up the grade near

THE BROKEN TRAIL

Sheppard, but I jumped off again. Anybody can get on or off there. I stayed in the country for the sake of my brother. I couldn't go away and leave him. So I stayed around to help him out."

"Are you a good shot?" some one asked.

"I don't say it as a boast, boys, but you can bet I am. I once shot a horse on a run at a thousand yards, and I can shoot holes in a fifty-cent piece thrown in the air." He spoke very affectionately of his mother and brother, as he had never failed to do during his previous confinement.

When the news of the capture became known the city was thrown into the wildest excitement. Everywhere there was the greatest admiration for the men who had effected the capture of the desperado, and without shedding of blood.

The heroic service rendered Canada by the men who guarded her frontiers in the West in the wild days now gone, and pre-

THE DESPERADO

served the safety of human life and property, has not yet been sufficiently recognized. This we may be sure of, that no history of the Canadian West will ever be complete without a prominent place given to the records of those men who, in the pioneer days, suffered isolation far out on the lonely plains, and held the supremacy of British law and order against the freebooters, whiskey smugglers and outlaws that crossed the border. It seems almost incredible that a mere handful of men should have accomplished so much in such a short time, and in a territory almost as large as Europe. That the Canadian West differs greatly in the conditions of life to-day from the West of the republic to the south is largely due to the work of the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

In the barracks, the brother about to be removed to Regina, overheard the guards

THE BROKEN TRAIL

whispering of the capture to each other. He broke down completely, and all through the night cried like a child. Ever since his arrest he was more interested in his brother's welfare than in his own. Whenever there was the least stir round about he would grow anxious and ask the guard on duty if his brother had been captured. Through the iron bars of the door he watched in vain hour after hour to catch a glimpse of him as he passed by.

Next day, shackled, handcuffed and guarded by five policemen, Ernest stood in the same dock from which six weeks before he had been sent to his doom. When he arose at the order of the court the judge said, "You are given a reprieve from the sentence of the court from to-morrow until a week from to-morrow, and the sentence of this court is that you be taken back whence you came, and on that date hanged by the

THE DESPERADO

neck until you are dead, and may God have mercy on your soul."

The respite came as a great surprise to him, since he expected that on the morrow he would be led to the gallows. For a moment the cloud that rested on his face passed away. Outside the crowd that had filled the court-room from early morning was waiting on the sidewalk. The doomed man appeared, chained so heavily that he could walk only six inches to a step. He poised his head high in the air, and never once cast a glance to right or left. His hair was matted and very long, and a thin beard covered the side of his face. He was fatter than when I saw him last in prison, and his cheeks, hitherto so pallid, glowed with a dark red color. He wore light brown moccasins, and over his shoulders, thrown well back, was the military cloak, now almost threadbare.

Every precaution was taken by the

THE BROKEN TRAIL

police to prevent a recurrence of the hold-up. Five men were on duty in the guard-house continually, while a sentry was placed outside.

For the first time the condemned man now realized that every avenue of hope was closed to him. To the death-watch he related the story of the six weeks without the vanity that characterized the recital of his exploits before the escape.

"I had," he said, "a bead on Inspector D—— when that officer pushed his rifle through the window. I could have turned round and shot the man at the other window. I was standing in the darkness of the cellar, and it was quite easy for me to see the officers without being seen myself. But I did not wish to shoot anybody, for I had already enough on my head."

From this time on he never more referred to his past except on the eve of his execution, when he handed me a synopsis

THE DESPERADO

of his life. He settled down to the seriousness of his position. Occasionally he would ask questions regarding some spiritual truths he had learned in his childhood. He had only a vague and misty conception of them after these years. A strain from a hymn that his mother sang, or a word from a prayer that she had taught him in these old days—that was all he could remember. Oh, the blighting curse of sin!

His brother was allowed to see him for a few minutes before being taken to Regina to serve his sentence.

“Good-bye, Ernest,” he struggled to say, his hands trembling with emotion. Other words he tried to speak and could not. They embraced each other in silence.

Now the last day had come. There was a general expectation that he would make some confession of his guilt before the day was over. When I called to see him he

THE BROKEN TRAIL

was sitting with writing-paper on his knee. He rose to his feet and took my hand graciously as I entered the cell.

“Waiting for you,” he said, in a quiet, meditative manner that brought out in sharp contrast the indifferent attitude of previous days. “You are very kind to me.”

“We are all brothers, and I am only doing a brother’s duty.” Whatever his thoughts were when these words were spoken he made it possible for me from that moment to speak straight to his heart. One thing he had retained, so true and abiding that I wondered then and since that it did not redeem his life, a boy’s love for his mother.

There were some things spoken at that hour which cannot be repeated—deep and dark things about which my lips must be forever sealed. He had been speaking with a doleful strain in his voice. Here

THE DESPERADO

and there he would stop and throw open a door in that subterranean world—the sixth hell—so that I might photograph the scene on my mind and go back to the youth of the country with a message coloured with a truer and more practical realism. It was a terrible portrayal of the tragedy enacted every day under the smoke counterpane, such a picture as no man could paint but he who had made his bed there.

When he had finished he said, “Here is a message that I have written for the young men. They may listen to me through you, and take warning before it is too late.” He also gave me the last letter he wrote to his mother and brother.

“These,” he said, “may bring them some comfort. Poor mother!” and he broke off, choked with the anguish of his heart. “Poor mother!” he tried to say again, “she does not deserve all this. I

THE BROKEN TRAIL

would die a thousand deaths if I could only take the disgrace—" He never finished the sentence. His sorrow was too deep for words.

"Tell mother how badly I feel that I should cause so much sorrow in her heart and bring such sadness on her head, and tell Willie to stay at home as long as there is a home to stay in."

He leaned against the wall of the cell, faint with the terrible burden that weighed him down.

"Ernest," I said, drawing him toward me, "it will be all right. Dry your tears, my boy. There is no sorrow that heaven cannot heal. Ernest," and I looked into his tear-flooded eyes, "there is something yet to be done." He gazed a long, deep gaze, and his cheeks quivered rapidly. "Something yet to be done." For the moment I hesitated to speak further. So great was his grief I was afraid

THE DESPERADO

lest any word of mine might add to it. "There is something you owe to yourself and to God and to the world."

He turned away his head. "For myself I do not wish to know, but there can be no forgiveness, my boy, without it, and you—oh, you cannot go to-morrow to meet death unforgiven. I do not wish to know to-night, but the world will wish to know to-morrow. Ernest, are you guilty or not guilty? 'If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' I shall expect an answer in the morning."

There was no reply. He stretched out his hand to the wall as if for support, and his chest rose and fell like the heaving sea.

"Your burden is heavy, my boy, but Christ is the burden-bearer. I can only tell you in this hour of His love for you. Whatever you may have been, whatever you are now—His love can save you."

THE BROKEN TRAIL

The darkness—and in that little place it was always dark—was falling black and gloomy, relieved only by the glimmering light from the window opposite. There was neither sound of voice nor foot in the corridors outside, for to both guards and prisoners alike the tragic hour sent out its solemn message. A hush, strange and weird, like that which precedes the coming of a great event, settled over them, broken only by stifled sobs like the cries of a child in the night.

I quoted to him from the prayer of Newman's that will linger in our memories so long as language lives and hearts love, hoping that it might be to him a ladder of light from the crypt of despair:

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Should'st lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will;—remember not past
years."

THE DESPERADO

Sounds that were scarcely audible came from his sealed lips.

“ I must go now, Ernest—you will need some rest.”

He turned round and put his hand on my shoulder with a look in his eyes that even after six years haunts me with its unutterable sadness. “ Will you be with me to the very last to-morrow ?”

“ Yes, Ernest—right to the scaffold.”

Before five o'clock next morning a carriage came for me. Through the dull mist, faint and low, the stars were shining. Not a word was spoken. The very houses seemed asleep. Here and there, however, we could discern the shimmer of a light in a window; for some people, unable to sleep, had risen early. My heart beat faster and faster as we moved rapidly to the last scene in this terrible tragedy.

Now, and for the first time, a double sentry was pacing the roadway outside the

THE BROKEN TRAIL

gates. "Halt!" they cried, raising their muskets. It was so sudden and unexpected that it took my breath away. They carefully examined my credentials, and having satisfied themselves as to my identity, admitted me to the guard-room.

The prisoner was holding his face against the bars, evidently awaiting my coming, and, almost spontaneously, we greeted each other in a very friendly manner.

"I hope you rested a little during the night."

"Not much," he replied. "I spent most of the time reading the passages you marked for me."

Meanwhile breakfast was brought to him, but he ate little. He was stripped of the prison garb and dressed in clean linen and a dark suit, which did not seem to be much worn. As soon as the guard departed he said to me, "When it's all over

THE DESPERADO

promise me you will write to mother; make it as easy as you can for her."

There was a plaintive note in his voice. His mother was his constant thought in those last days, no less than my own. I had yet to learn, when the heat and fever of the day was over, that I had assented to an almost impossible task.

He found much solace in the hymns of his childhood during my former visits, and now for the last time I sang, "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus," and read the Shepherd Psalm with a few comments interpolated here and there.

We knelt down to pray. Beside us was the death-watch, and behind us the guards. I put my arm around him, and he gripped my hand in his. His frame shook violently, and for a while he seemed to be plunged in a paroxysm of pain. It was hard to pray—never so hard. Without delay, for there were but a few moments

THE BROKEN TRAIL

left to us, I said, "Now, Ernest, what is your answer?"

"Oh, I'm guilty! I'm guilty!" he wailed out piteously, and a great flood of tears fell on the cold stone floor. The pent-up feelings had burst. The iron will was broken. The secret was revealed at last.

"Oh!—oh!—oh!" he moaned, and lifted his arms up and down in rapid motion, "God forgive me, forgive me—I'm guilty! I'm guilty!"

And more beautiful than the dawn that was breaking came heaven's own sweet light.

"And now, Ernest, this is for you—the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ preserve your soul unto everlasting life."

We rose to our feet. The storm was over. Like a ship with torn sail and shattered mast, he had entered the haven

THE DESPERADO

of perfect peace. With the back of his hand he brushed the tears from his cheeks, and, turning round to the guard, he stretched his hands through the bars, saying, "Good-bye, boys, you've been kind to me."

Then he turned to the death-watch and repeated the farewell with all the emphasis of a man with but a moment to live.

There was a knock at the outer door. Divining the meaning of the hurrying feet and muffled sounds, he exclaimed with quiet resignation, "It's R——." With this he threw his arms round my neck, leaned his head on my shoulder, and expressed his gratitude again and yet again. There was no delay. The door was thrown open, and the hangman with bleared eyes and bloated face entered in evident excitement.

"Morning," he said in a gruff voice; "stretch out your arms." He buckled the

THE BROKEN TRAIL

prisoner's wrists and pinioned them cross-wise to his breast, and the dark procession moved slowly to the scaffold. In Ernest's buttonhole, sweet and fragrant, was the white rose I had given him that morning.

A group of officials and press men had gathered in the jail-yard. We began to climb the steps to the scaffold, when, midway, he leaned towards me and said, "Won't you pray for me once more?" The procession stopped. A brief prayer was offered, and he was heard to whisper the "Amen."

When we reached the platform I stood in front of him, and, while the hangman adjusted a white cap over his eyes, repeated these words:

"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

The hangman was impatient. He raised his hand to indicate that everything was

THE DESPERADO

ready. But I persisted and finished the verse, and then repeated, slowly and softly, the old familiar prayer,

“Our Father who art in heaven, . . . deliver—us—from evil.”

The grey mist of that February morning enshrouded the limp and lifeless form of a young man who had a good chance in life—but missed it.

THE SCENE AT THE OPERA HOUSE.

It was four o'clock. The sharp, frosty air sent the blood tingling through our veins. Above and beyond was the clear blue sky, dotted here and there like the ocean with myriads of islands, flecked with the gold and purple of the western sun.

The throngs were moving, hurrying in haste, to the old Opera House, which has since passed away with many traditions

THE BROKEN TRAIL

and landmarks of the early days. Before the hour of service every seat was occupied with men, old and young, and none younger than sixteen.

Packed closely in the long galleries and standing in every available space in the large auditorium, they waited, these western men, in deep and respectful silence. Behind me was a chorus of male voices, and so crowded was the stage in front, as I arose to speak, there was scarcely standing room. The drunkard and the gambler were there; the professional man and the artisan; the old-timer with his bronzed and beaten face and the unsuspecting youth hardly awake to the mystery of life. I looked across that human sea, dark as it seemed to be that Sunday afternoon from the strain and sorrow of the week before, and there above it all I saw but one thing, a little white cloud rising out of the sea—a human soul.

THE DESPERADO

“Men of Calgary, from the prison cell I come to you bearing in my hands a message written with the tears and blood of a young man who last week died on the scaffold. Indeed to young men the world over, beyond the reach of my living voice to-day, I fain would speak, for such was his wish.

“It was said by a philosopher of the old French school of materialism, ‘However cleverly we may have carved the mysterious block of which our life is made, the black vein of destiny ever reappears in it.’ It would seem at first sight as if this interpretation was true to the facts of life and experience. But in the last analysis, while there is much that is beyond our ken, one thing remains immutable as the law that binds the planet to its orbit and the ocean to the shore, ‘Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.’ What men call Fate to-day—and this word is

THE BROKEN TRAIL

often a convenient subterfuge for the man who gambles away his life and fritters away his years in sin—God calls Consequence. Every sin has its own penalty just as every seed has its own development. There is a law of cause and effect—a law of continuity regulating the reproductive process. The substance of the seed passes into the plant which springs from it. So is it with the retributive consequences of sin. Every act is going to reproduce itself. Like begets like. Whatever is put into the first of life is put into the whole of life. The folly of the child becomes the vice of the youth and then the crime of the man. Some day we will reap the harvest.

“Make no mistake about it. There is a strange Nemesis in life that will never allow wrongdoing to go unrequited in this world or in any other world; and on the trail of every evil-doer follow the hounds that never know defeat. What we do in

THE DESPERADO

the dark to-day will be revealed in the
light to-morrow.

‘The tissue of the life to be
We weave in colours all our own;
And in the field of destiny
We reap as we have sown.’

“Again, there is much said about environment—and the last word has not yet been spoken on this subject—that man is the product of circumstances, nothing more, nothing less; that he cannot help being good or bad; that he is no more accountable for his conduct than a flower is responsible for its colour. It is said also—and some of you here have been saying it, too, during these unhappy days—that the issues of life are determined by antecedent causes over which a man has no control; that character and destiny are simply questions of what a man eats, where he lives, and who his parents were.

“Methinks we need no other argument

THE BROKEN TRAIL

against this doctrine than the testimony of our own consciousness. There is nothing on which we have clearer knowledge than the consciousness of human freedom. We know we have power to do or to leave undone. 'I have no one to blame but myself for being here,' were the significant words spoken to me from the prison cell. Every day we are making choices and deciding on courses of action that affect the whole of life.

"The influence of environment and heredity is not to be overlooked, but to such an extent has this truth been carried that, like the old religious theory of predestination, it has become to many of you the Alpha and Omega of a stark gospel that ignores half the facts of life. Heredity is not everything. The son of Jesse James, the notorious Missouri outlaw, passed the final examination before the State Board, and is

THE DESPERADO

now a full-fledged lawyer. He was left an orphan at six years, with a heritage of distrust and suspicion that might have crushed him. He has redeemed the name from obloquy, and bids fair to lead an honoured and useful life. It takes more than heredity to crush a human soul. What have you to say about the girl who has kept her soul pure as the lily, like Browning's poetic child Pompilia, although born in the moral miasma of Haymarket or Whitechapel? 'Life is a mysterious block,' said the French writer. Very well, let us keep the figure. The world is the studio in which the block is carved and chiselled by the thought and action of to-day into the living statuary of our destiny.

'It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.'

THE BROKEN TRAIL

“ So, men of Calgary, I give you the story of his young and tragic life, told to me with all the emphasis of a man awaiting the approach of doom. He was born in Kansas, October 12th, 1882, and at the age of fourteen his father died. Then he went with his widowed mother to Buffalo, Wyoming, and thence to Trinidad, Colorado, where he enlisted in the United States Infantry for the Philippines. At San Francisco, on the eve of his departure for the seat of war, he was examined in the hospital, and when they discovered his left lung was diseased, he was given his discharge. He wandered over the Western States, committing every crime in the calendar, until he was branded as an outlaw and a fugitive from justice. For four days he went back to see his mother, the first visit he had paid her in six years. God help the young man who never thinks it worth while in six years to travel back

THE DESPERADO

again to mother and to home! Then he crossed the line into British Columbia. Ultimately he found his way to the district north of Calgary, and at Ponoka, where his mother was visiting some friends, he was arrested on the charge of horse-stealing. While in the custody of the police he jumped the train and walked to Lacombe, then to Calgary and to Banff, where he was arrested the second time. He was sentenced to three years servitude in Stony Mountain, but was soon brought back to Calgary and tried for murder.

“What the trial and its issue was I need not now repeat. The sad and tragic ending of a life so young and not altogether without promise will ever remain one of the most thrilling and terrible chapters in the annals of criminal life in our country.

“A criminal at fourteen! Oh, that I could turn the hands of the clock to-day to that hour in a boy's life so that the eye

THE BROKEN TRAIL

of the nation may see it. Fourteen! fourteen!

‘And a boy’s will is the wind’s will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long
thoughts.’

“Fourteen! and the young man awakens from his long reverie—the passion for freedom flows in his veins—freedom at any price—consequences are small, risks are nothing, and he tosses his cap in the air. Fourteen! Oh, wonderful magic hour, when to the touch of youth the golden gate flies open, and the meteor morn strikes ridge and hilltop beyond and beyond; there is neither equipoise to his thinking nor equilibrium to his living. He is a Rob Roy in the making. He lives in a world of his own, *ne plus ultra*, where nobody ever comes and so few ever understand.

“In the last days, when his wild spirit was broken and I had gained his con-

THE DESPERADO

fidence, I asked what had brought him to all this, and he began with the significant words, 'It might have been different with me if I had had a father to guide me when I was fourteen. I read novels of the Diamond Dick, Nick Carter and James Boys class, and they filled my mind with wild and false notions of life. They led me to bad habits, bad companions and cigarette smoking. I learned to handle firearms, and I do not know if there was ever one put up that I could not take to pieces in five minutes.'

"And now, men of Calgary, I shall read to you the message from this young man, written by his own hand, February 1st, 1904, twenty-four hours before he went to the scaffold:

"'Young men of Calgary:—

"'Remember, boys, I am not in a position to make any exaggeration. Here is my experience in regard to books, such as Diamond Dick's, Nick Carter's, Buffalo Bill's and James

THE BROKEN TRAIL

Boys'. I think by my own experience they are the starting of a romantic life. I know I used to read those books before I left home, and think how nice it would be if I could belong to a gang of brigands. Well, boys, I did have lots of fun as long as it lasted. But when my days were numbered I thought of my romantic life, boys. Oh, boys, take my advice and stay away from saloons, gambling-houses, and shun bad company, especially the house of ill-fame, for you know one bad woman is worse than ten bad men. She can lead you into the clutches of the devil before you are aware of the fact, and I tell you with a true heart, stay away from those bad women.

"Here is the story of my life, boys. I used to read novels when I was home, and that started me to going into bad company, drinking, gambling, and the first thing I knew I was looking out from behind the bars. I met some bad men in jail, and we planned, and I got out, but they caught me again, and I got out again, and so on for five years, till I landed in a condemned cell. Escaped again, but Providence proved against me, and I was fetched back to meet my fatal doom on the scaffold. I had to leave my dear ones at home and go among strangers, lay out nights, go without anything to eat for two days at a time, be wet and cold, and I have sat down many a time and thought

THE DESPERADO

of my dear old mother at home, breaking her heart, longing for her boy.

“‘Oh, boys! don’t go away from home. Just think of Ernest—me in my doomed cell. I would die a dozen times to take the disgrace off my family. But, boys, it is too late now. Oh, what is my dear old mother doing to-day? Maybe she is dead. I wish I could see her, but she is far, far away from here, and I am going to be hanged in about twenty-four hours. Take my advice, dear boys, and stay at home, shun novels, bad company, drink and cigarettes. Don’t do anything you are afraid to let your mother know.

“ERNEST ———.

“‘Calgary, Alberta, Canada, N.-W. T.
R. N.-W. M. P.’”

“Oh, young man, standing on the bridge between the old and the new, building your castles in Spain and travelling through Bohemia—wait a minute! The promised land does not always lie beyond the mountains, and all is not gold that glitters. They say that on the way to the Yukon—that modern Eldorado—there may be seen the bleached skeletons of those

THE BROKEN TRAIL

fevered wanderers who, in the first mad rush for gold, perished amid the wild wastes of that Great North Land.

“Dream away, young man, dream away! I hope we shall never grow so faithless and materialistic as to destroy the hopes and visions of these tender years. But if your dreams are fermenting a love for a life of romance and hairbreadth escapes, for the green of the gambling table and the glitter of the grog shop, then you are following a will o’ the wisp, an *ignis fatuus*, that will only make more bitter the ruin when it comes.

“Oh, fathers and mothers, remember the pregnant words from the prison-cell. Fourteen! fourteen! the hour of crisis in your boy’s life, and the hour of your responsibility, too. Give him your sympathy and counsel, teach him to know himself and the biology of his being. Fill your home with laughter and music,

THE DESPERADO

home first, home last,—and you have found the key to the young man problem. But ignore the sportfulness of youth, deride him because he prefers a game of baseball to the reading of a Bible story, pull down the blinds and close the shutters fast, dress yourself in black and croak like an Alpine crow, uproot the sunflower and plant the weeping willow—and do not be surprised if late at night the door-bell rings and your boy staggers drunk across the carpet.

“There is but one word more. Oh! God, if there is a man here, old or young, indifferent to this warning voice, wake him with a start. Keep the bell tolling until it will only seem to say, home—home—my Father’s home. It is said that when the *Lexington* went down on the Atlantic coast in a dreadful storm, the bell on the wreck could be heard for days and days tolling its warning notes to the

THE BROKEN TRAIL

sailors far out at sea. So from the wreck of a human life a warning bell is tolling, tolling. Listen, men of Calgary! It speaks—a saved soul—a lost life! ‘One man was saved on the cross, that none might despair; and only one, that none might presume.’ ”

THE AFTERMATH.

I.

THROUGH the auditorium groups of men remained behind in different attitudes long after the audience had dispersed. A man, stretching his arm over the shoulders of two men, was pulling the collar of my coat with his long, thin fingers. I was talking earnestly with a score of men across the stage, and for a moment paid no heed to him until he gave me a jerk that almost drew me off my feet.

He was tall, over six feet, and of a some-

THE DESPERADO

what slender build. His face, which looked as if it had not been washed for many days, was pinched almost to a point; the forehead was exceptionally broad, and his dark eyes, hidden behind a pair of gold-rimmed eye-glasses, were red and swollen. A scraggy beard covered his cheeks, and his coal-black hair was long and knotted, after the fashion of the great unwashed. He wore a loose, saggy coat, quite unsuited for those freezing days, and round his neck a woollen scarf in double fold.

"I want to see you, sir," he said, his face quite contorted with excitement.

"Yes, sir, what is the matter?"

"Oh, I have gone all wrong."

"Drink?"

"Everything."

"Where are you boarding?"

"Nowhere."

"Where are you working?"

THE BROKEN TRAIL

"Nowhere."

"Where did you sleep last night?"

"Nowhere."

"Then, where do you get your meals?"

"Anywhere! And I was not always like this."

"No man ever is," I remarked, "but it is not what you have been, it is what you hope to be."

"I have no hope, sir," and he shook his head sadly. "No hope but—"

"You do not mean that," I interrupted. "Life surely has, even yet, something better in store for you."

"Yes, sir, I mean it, I mean it—annihilation—anything, and it cannot come too soon."

"Well, a man usually gets in this world what he seeks after. Sit down a minute. Tell me, what have you been seeking after?"

He threw back his shoulders and stared

THE DESPERADO

at me for a little. "Happiness," he replied, with a deep, sonorous voice, "like many another man who never found it."

"On the other hand!" I replied, "quite unlike many another man who has found it. Evidently it all depends upon the motive and spirit with which you set out after it, for no man with a true heart and purpose ever wholly missed it."

"Hardly true to the facts, sir," he continued. "Happiness is a gift, just like genius in art or in poetry; but a man has to suffer the pain of disappointment like me, at the end of fruitless years, before he wakens up to it. Surely I and other men like me can be forgiven for arriving at this conception of life."

The sound of the man's voice had drawn to the stage a group of men—for many of whom he was stating the problem of their lives as well as his own. The gradual falling of his voice into a rich, sweet

THE BROKEN TRAIL

cadence produced quite an obvious effect on the men around, and indeed on myself.

“ I know there is no argument so conclusive as experience, but let me make this observation: what you have been seeking after is pleasure, which is to many people a misnomer for happiness. Pleasure may be a medium of gratification to the senses, but to a soul that longs, yearns indeed, for something more abiding, it is only Dead Sea fruit. And in the garden of life, boys,” I continued, looking round on those faces that sin had so scarred, “ there is other fruit, which if any man eats he will never hunger again. This, boys, is the experience of other men and of my own.”

The man had taken a seat and was now supporting his head with both his hands. Every eye was centred on him—this man with the black face and gold-rimmed eyeglasses and a soft, cultured voice.

“ Now, boys, I am going into the little

THE DESPERADO

room, where any of you may see me alone if you so wish."

He was the first to follow. "Is there any way out?" he said, his fingers clutching the handle of the door.

"Only one way, my friend—'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'"

"That is a long way for me to travel, but if that is the only way, God helping me, I will."

He waited outside until the last man had come and gone. On our way home, I requested him to reveal his identity, and, after a little hesitation, he drew out of his pocket some papers which he had brought from England. "I can only ask you," he said, as he put them into my hand, "that you regard my name with the same secrecy that a priest would do in the confessional. I have been living under an assumed name since I came to the West four years ago, for my father's sake."

THE BROKEN TRAIL

His father was a dignitary of the Established Church. He himself had graduated from Eton, winning scholarships that entitled him to special privileges in Cambridge. In those student days he had fallen into intemperate habits, which ultimately forced him to leave home for the seclusion of this western land.

In the rooms attached to the church he sat down next day and wrote to his father. Meanwhile, he was appointed interim secretary of the Young Men's Club, and for three months filled the position in a manner that won for him the respect and admiration of us all. I can never think of the letter his father sent, as he besought him to return home, without feeling that here was a paraphrase of the simple story in the pearl of parables.

We were sorry when he left us that summer afternoon. He made a very striking appearance as he stood on the platform

THE DESPERADO

chatting freely with a few friends, clad in a light grey suit, tan shoes and a white panama hat. When the carriages were drawn into tension he stepped into the vestibule.

“Good-bye,” he said, raising his hat from his head and nodding to each of us, “Good-bye! I shall come back again to see you.”

He came back—one day.

II.

The escapades of the young desperado and his tragic end were published by the press over the whole continent. About three months later a rancher, living eighty miles from the city, came to see me. The parsonage had been under quarantine for three weeks, and the only approach to the study was by temporary steps which were placed under the window. The casement was of very narrow dimensions, and as he

THE BROKEN TRAIL

was a portly man of considerable weight I did not invite him in.

"Can I come in?" he asked, as I threw up the window.

"Certainly, if you can get in."

With no little difficulty he was pulled inside, and after he had recovered from the somewhat exciting entry, he presented a card bearing the name of a young probationer, with the words thereon: "This will introduce Mr. —, who wishes to get the question answered, What must I do to be saved?"

He paced the floor in a very nervous manner, and there was a wild look in his eyes. For a moment I wondered if I were face to face with a crazy man, and with no possible chance of an exit.

"Why have you come here?" I inquired, putting the card in my pocket.

"To see you," he replied, falteringly, as if he were embarrassed.

THE DESPERADO

“Why need you come eighty miles to see me? Are there not ministers near your home?”

“I followed the story of that murder case in the newspapers, and it got such a hold of me that I have not been able to get away from it. I am the worst man in all that community, and I am getting worse all the time.”

His words, earnest and vehement as they were, as once disarmed my fears. He snatched at every spiritual truth that was offered as though he had never heard of it before.

Some souls are born into the spiritual world as a flower bursts into life on a June morning. There are other souls that cannot move a step until the fetters are broken through wrestling and tears. His was the peaceful passing, so quiet, indeed, that I was hardly conscious that the light had come.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

“What can I do now?” he asked, as he jumped to his feet.

“Do the best you can do in your home and in your neighborhood, and let me hear from you later.”

It was one of those districts far away from any centre of religious or commercial activity, unvisited by a preacher at that time. It is incidental to the rapid settlement of the vast Province of Alberta that there should be such places which, even at this present hour, through the inadequate supply of men and money, the Church has not been able to reach. In the years to come, the spread of education and the commingling of so many elements in this western empire will produce, let us hope, such a race as the world has never seen—giants physically and mentally. But what place will be given to the moral and the religious, which, surely, is the crown and flower of evolution? Europe is strewn with

THE DESPERADO

the wrecks of nations that, amid the glory of material splendour, grew indifferent to those things which alone ensure the peace and integrity of empire. Let us lay the foundations now. It is almost now or never.

His home was a very humble place, as indeed the homes of all pioneers are. But within a week he started a Sunday-school there for old and young folks, and although missionaries have come and gone since that day, and he himself has gone away, too, the man whom I had first thought in my study to be demented is spoken of in that place as its first missionary.

When the day of unfoldment comes, and there are neither pioneers nor frontiers, the diadem on the brow of the Redeemer will reveal the trophies won by such men, and women, too, on the bleak and lonely prairies.

THE OUTCAST

*Man, false man, smiling, destructive
man.*

—*Theodosius.*

Pity's akin to love.

—*Southerne.*

*Grim-hearted world, that look'st with
Levite eyes*

*On those poor fallen by too much faith
in man,*

*She that upon thy freezing threshold lies,
Starved to more sinning by thy savage
ban,*

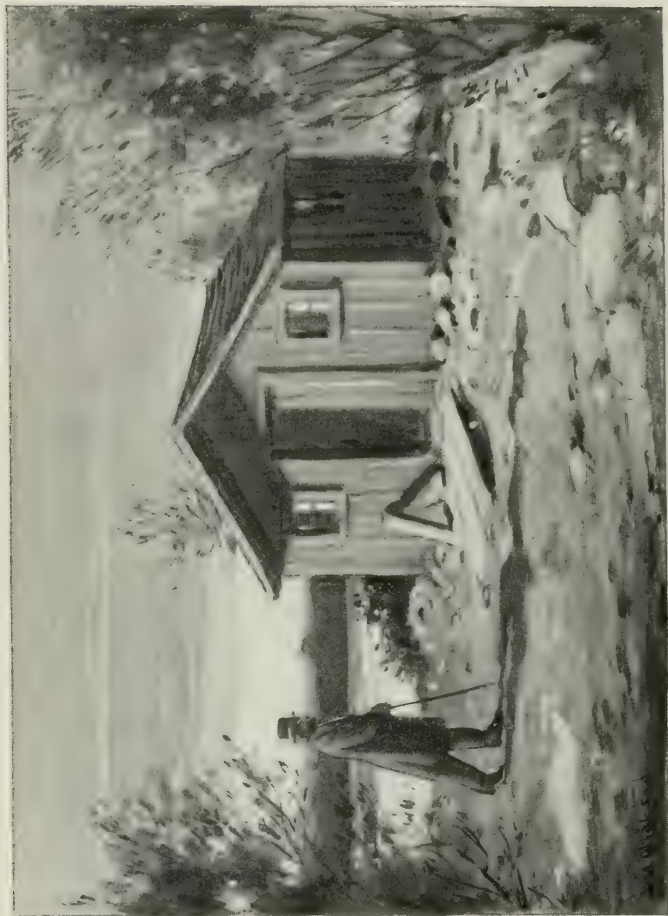
*Seeking that refuge because foulest vice,
More God-like than thy virtue is, whose
span*

*Shuts out the wretched only, is more free
To enter Heaven than thou shalt ever be!*

—*Legend of Brittany.*

*But yet the pity of it, Iago! O, Iago,
The pity of it, Iago!*

—*Othello.*



“I was pus’ing my way through the brush and willow by the river bank, when
I stumbled on a cabin.” *Page 151.*

THE OUTCAST

I WAS pushing my way through the black eery gloom of brush and willow by the river-bank, when by chance, in a sequestered spot, I stumbled on a cabin.

At first there was no sign of life visible anywhere, and I hesitated at the threshold. Looking round for the window, I found it boarded up, so that not even a ray of sunshine could steal in. The door, which was slightly ajar, I threw open, and peered into the darkness. Presently a low, sad moan drew me almost unconsciously toward the farther corner.

Behind a tattered curtain I could see the flickering light of an oil lamp. I pulled the curtain aside, and there, clad in thin, tawdry finery, was the fragile form of a woman, huddled together like a heap of garbage. For the moment it looked so shadowy and intangible that, to assure myself, I touched it again and again. I could

THE BROKEN TRAIL

see nothing in the dim light. So, stooping down, I raised her head toward the light and brushed back the long, dark hair.

She was asleep—or dead, I knew not which. Taking the light in one hand, and holding her head in the other, I carefully scrutinized the features. They were small and delicately shaped. There was a hectic flush on the cheek and small, deep lines that wasting disease had made in her face. Her lips were pale—almost white. Her eyes were so sunken that, at that moment, I could not discern their color.

The man who had called me so strangely to this strange place had not returned. He gave neither name nor address, only a few pointed directions, hurriedly spoken, and drove away as mysteriously as he came. He seemed to be a Hebrew—that was all I could say—a well-built, clean-shaven Hebrew. I conjured all this to myself as I sat by the bedside.

THE OUTCAST

Who was she, this sweet creature, solitary and alone in a dingy cabin, and was she dead, or was she in a stupor from which there might be no awakening? The strangeness of it all haunted me. The silence seemed to speak to me of tragedy. An orange-box, on which were placed some bottles, a silver-mounted cigarette case, and a crucifix, served evidently both for a table and a chair. This, indeed, was the only piece of furniture—if furniture it were—I could discern in the place except the low wooden bench on which she lay.

It was a weird and lonely vigil I spent that night, waiting for the long-delayed return of the only one who could explain the situation. For I had then no hope that the woman would ever be able to tell her own tale. Stooping over her, I again raised her head and spoke a word or two. But she heeded not.

She cannot be more than twenty, I

THE BROKEN TRAIL

said to myself, and the man, her husband, I supposed, must be a little more.

At length my impatience overcame me, and I was about to open the door when the man entered. He was very courteous, and excused himself for the delay in returning. "Just got some stimulant for her," he said, making his way to her bedside, "and a little oil for the lamp."

"Then she is sleeping," I said—"a very deep and long sleep, I fear."

He made no further comment, but was loud in his expression of sympathy for her, sometimes calling her "the woman" or "the gal."

"She is your wife, I suppose?"

"Nay, sir," he replied, raising his heavy eyebrows, and with a look of surprise.

"She is my luv."

"Your love?" I repeated. "You mean—"

"My luv," he again interjected, and

THE OUTCAST

there was a slight agitation in his manner.

“ I’ve luvèd her for four years.”

“ Four years—not so bad, sir, for a Hebrew. Your intentions were to marry her?”

“ Sure, sir, when we got the money together ; for she, poor gal, luvès me.”

Hardly had he finished speaking when the form moved and the lips parted. We stooped down to catch the words, while she took a breath between each syllable.

“ It’s—getting—dark—Solly.”

“ She ain’t conscious—a pretty sick woman she is, sir.” And he put a teaspoonful of brandy to her parched lips.

“ Solly stands for Solomon, does it not ? And Solomon is a Hebrew name ?”

“ It is, sir,” he replied, abruptly, “ and I’m not ashamed of it either.”

“ And she—” I began, pointing to her whom he had just called his “ luvè.”

He abruptly broke in: “ She’s a Chris-

THE BROKEN TRAIL

tian"—that was all he knew of the term—"as good a one as ever lived, only she ain't been very fortunate. She wanted to see you, but she ain't conscious now. She's been dozing like that since last night."

"And you are alone with her. Has she no friends or relatives?"

"Only the gal that brought her that," he said, pointing to the crucifix, "and me." As he said this the door opened and a woman of prepossessing appearance entered quietly. She bowed gracefully and shook hands with both of us. "This is her friend," he continued. "She don't talk much English," and forthwith they began an animated conversation in French.

I observed her very closely. She was elaborately made up with paint and powder, and was heavily perfumed with parme violets. Almost immediately the awful conviction dawned on me that the bundle

THE OUTCAST

of humanity in the corner was a unit in the vast army of degraded and blighted womanhood. Hers, alas, the same sad story, so old in the history of the race that it need not be retold. With this conviction in my heart I arose and looked at her again with ever-deepening pity. Presently she began to breathe heavily. Thinking it might ease her, I raised her head and turned the pillow, which was hot and hard.

“It’s—getting—dark—Solly,” I heard her whisper again, hardly conscious. I beckoned him over.

A little later a pair of sphinx-like eyes were looking at us from a tangled mass of hair.

“You know me, Esther?” he said.

“Solly!” she muttered with a faint smile, and stretched out to him her lily-white hand. His name was on her lips,

THE BROKEN TRAIL

and she lisped it at intervals like the notes of a song.

He gave her more brandy and bathed her brow with cologne water. The sweet assurance of gratitude was on her face, and the color revived in her cheeks.

"The clergyman is here, Esther, and Marie."

She started up at the words, and opened her sunken eyes in evident excitement.

"I hope you have not been waiting long," she replied, as I pressed her thin, frail hand in mine. "May I speak with you alone?" The words came without much effort, and her cheeks, already red, flushed crimson.

"You are hardly able to speak to-night; it might be better for you to wait until morning."

"Oh, I cannot," she pleaded tenderly—"the night seems so long—I want to tell it all to you now. Help me up, Solly."

THE OUTCAST

He raised her gently and supported her head with a pillow.

"Thank you, dear," she said. "You and Marie may go now."

I rose and sat on the end of the wooden bench where she lay. The light was now burning brightly, and I could discern more clearly the sad expression of her wasted face.

"Oh, do you think God will ever forgive me?"

"Forgive you, my child—this is the hour of forgiveness."

"But my life—my life!" she repeated, and closed her eyes tightly, as if haunted by the spectres of past transgression; and the words that followed were lost to me in a deep, sad wail wrung from her heart. She paused a while. Remorse was in her soul.

"You know," I continued, "the meaning of this," and I lifted the crucifix to her eyes.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

"Yes," she said, in tones half-choked with despair, "but it's too late for me—too late now."

"Never," I hastened to reply, "never too late."

The sorrow of her heart was so great that her eyes had lost their power for tears. "Oh, do you think," she burst out in tones stronger than before, "there's any chance for me? I was not all to blame." She was breathing heavily again, and small beads of sweat glistened on her forehead.

I put the crucifix into her hand and repeated the words, "To the uttermost—to the uttermost." Hardly had I finished when her face turned pale, her head fell lifelessly to the side, and she lapsed again into unconsciousness.

"Esther," I whispered in her ear, in the hope that the sound of her own name might rouse her, "are you asleep?"

THE OUTCAST

The silence hung like a pall over the little place, and the sighing of the wind among the willows and poplars outside sent a chill to my heart. I went nervously to the door, expecting to find the Hebrew waiting outside. He had gone down the roadway to escort Marie through the thick brush. Occasionally there came on the wind the muffled sound of their voices. The dark waters of the Bow reflected the crescent moon like a silver shell.

I hastened back to the bedside and knelt down in prayer, when she spoke in scarcely audible whispers, "Light—me—a—cigarette. Light—me—a—cigarette."

I lit a match and gave her a cigarette. But her strength was gone. It fell unlighted from her lips. She gave a faint sigh and sank back again on the pillow. "You will be stronger presently," I said, "just wait a minute."

For the first time she seemed to realize

THE BROKEN TRAIL

her extreme weakness. After a moment she recovered somewhat, and with the words trembling on her tongue, gasped heavily, "Light—me—a—cigarette."

There was something in the tone of the voice rather than in the words that impelled me to gratify again her dying wish. When it was nearly finished she opened her eyes and looked at me with a brighter expression.

"You know," she said, regretfully, "this is a bad habit I formed in my life, and it's too late to give it up now. My nerves are all gone, sir, and it will steady them while I talk with you."

Forthwith she began the story of her young and unfortunate life. But sometimes her voice would fail in the telling of it, however hard she might try to speak, and her lips would be compressed so firmly that it seemed as if one would hear her tale no more.

THE OUTCAST

She was born in Chicago, and there her mother lived at that moment. She could never mention her mother's name without a flood of tears. Once when the sobs choked her voice and the hot tears forced themselves through her closed eyelids I ventured to ask her if her mother knew about it, and she replied, "No, and when she does she will forgive me. I was not all to blame."

She recounted, too, the joys of her girlhood; especially the day when the good bishop placed his hand on her head; the dress she wore; and the desire that filled her young heart that glad confirmation day.

Then, in words broken at times with a rush of emotion, she related how, for three years, she went regularly to church; how good she tried to be in these days—and God would, surely, not forget that in the reckoning—how she went with her

THE BROKEN TRAIL

mother to visit the poor and the sick in the dark places of the city; how—and at the memory of it her lips twitched paler and paler, she stammered, hesitated, and her breath seemed to fail altogether. She tried to speak—how hard she tried!—but could only find expression in the words, “Oh, how can I tell you? Do you think God will forgive me? I was not all to blame.”

“You need not tell me, my child,” I said, taking hold of her fevered hand. “God knows all about it—that is enough.”

Her soul was struggling in the vortex of unutterable sorrow. The fires of hell were ablaze in her bosom. “It was a terrible mistake, sir,” she said, in a forced whisper, and her heart was beating wildly, like the bosom of a wounded bird—“but God knows I’ve paid the price for it.”

A darkness like that of death seemed to surround her. She raised her hand from

THE OUTCAST

right to left, as if groping for something—groping, groping; then her beating heart lay still again.

There was silence for some moments. Then she opened her eyes and, with the words trembling on her tongue, began to tell how she was led into the tragic ruin of her life—how she went to service alone or with her mother—how she was sought by the man who had so often ushered her into the family seat by the choir stalls—how he had concealed a serpent in the beautiful flowers he sent her—how he had infected the chalice of love with a deadly poison—the hypocrite, the betrayer—how he had thrown over her innocent eyes the cloak of his religion—how he had won her trust, her love, her devotion—her ruin. “May God have mercy on him,” she stammered out again in broken exclamations, “wherever he is to-night—and on me.”

There was no note of bitterness in her

THE BROKEN TRAIL

speech. In the hour of her crucifixion she would not be bitter. She would pray for the Father's forgiveness for the wretch who had bought her innocence at the cost of her life. She would gladly pay the price to the uttermost farthing if only God would be merciful.

I stooped down and picked up the crucifix, which had dropped in a moment of great tension, and held it to her eyes, which were now almost hidden with the wet hair that had fallen over her forehead. "This, my child, is the pledge and symbol of the divine mercy."

She took her hand and cleared away the dishevelled mass. "Mercy! mercy!" she cried, as she grasped the crucifix with trembling fingers and looked up to heaven. "Yes—God will be merciful—to me—for Christ's sake."

The night was almost gone by this time, and she, worn out with the struggle and



"This, my child, is the pledge and symbol of the divine mercy."

THE OUTCAST

sorrow of the long hours, dropped off to sleep.

Meanwhile, Solly had returned and was sitting at the open door with his face buried in his hands. His eyes were heavy with sleep—that was all. Her quiet and even breathing fell upon his ear. He stepped forward and gazed earnestly at her with a look of surprise. “Poor gal,” he said, “she ain’t all to blame.”

I waited for a moment, scarcely knowing whether silence was best—and then the words escaped from my lips, “No, but the world will blame her—and you, too!”

He started up like one who for the first time feels the trembling of the earth beneath that presages disaster. He looked at her and then at me, and a strange whiteness was on his face.

“She is asleep,” I interjected. “She told me nothing about you—but I know—”

THE BROKEN TRAIL

"You know vot?" he broke off suddenly.
"Vot do you know? You know—"

"Hush, you will waken her. Let her sleep." He was gesticulating wildly after the manner of his race, and the words, spoken deeply in his throat, seemed to choke him at every syllable. "I know, sir," I replied, "just enough to make me say to you now that you—you—are not free from blame."

He was staggered for the moment, and the silence gave the seal to the awful truth that was yet unexpressed.

"The gal is mine. I've luv'd her four years, and she weren't no maid when I met her either."

Other words he spoke, hard and foul words such as no one should hear, as he walked the floor in the delirium of his rage.

"There is no room here, sir, for words such as these. You have loved her for four

THE OUTCAST

years, you say. So be it. But she lived a life of shame four years, and with your consent, the while you were a man of leisure. Is that the act of a lover?"

He was speechless. The strong tension on his face relaxed. With bowed head and eyes cast down he went towards the door.

There was pity in my heart for him. He was born in the ghetto of Chicago, a child of dirt and darkness. But ignorance in this day cannot be innocence, not even for a Hebrew. And then there was the law of his fathers.

"Well," I said, as I moved towards him with outstretched hand, "this is not the hour for hard words. Atonement day will be here soon. Seek the forgiveness of God. Be kind to her—she has not long to live—and I shall send a nurse in the morning."

When Esther awoke in the early morning a new passion was surging in her

THE BROKEN TRAIL

breast—and yet not new. She had dreamed she was back again in the pure atmosphere of her mother's home, and the memory of it filled her soul with an unutterable longing. How often she had dreamed of it through these years in the house of bondage—oh, God, how often!

She might have gone home. How many times she vowed she would, and no one would ever know her past. But—and the irony of her dream rent her soul like a sharp sword. The overwhelming sense of her utter helplessness in the grip of an inexorable fate, and the dark foreboding that she would never again look into her mother's face, made her tremble violently.

She could see through the open door the crimson light of the rising sun filling the valley, and striking the ridge and hilltops beyond the river with a rich iridescence. A beautiful world, she thought—she wondered she had not seen its beauty before.

THE OUTCAST

But then she had been an exile, voluntarily indeed—and no one knew it better than herself; an exile for four years—and she so young! It was all very sad. “Would her exile be ended now?” she asked herself, half afraid of her own thoughts.

Chicago seemed so far away. Would she ever go back to mother—to home? The lurking fear brought a cold perspiration to her forehead, and she groaned at intervals like one tormented with a spasm of pain.

The place looked strangely solitary in the distance that afternoon as I walked up the roadway which lay on the north side. Through the thick brush which guarded the approach on the other side two women emerged, dressed in shabby black. Their faces were thickly veiled, but I recognized the form of the woman I had met the night before. They passed along in

THE BROKEN TRAIL

silence, and moved on quickly toward the river-bank.

It was easy to brand them with the scarlet letter of their shame and drive them into the wilderness. But what would Jesus do? What would Jesus do if he had met them on the roadway? The question burned itself into my soul. How far has the Church worked out the problem, or has she given up the problem as impossible of solution? Are we content to say that it is an incident of our civilization? Alas for the Christ! Alas for the Cross! They will not go to church. Enough said. The Church must go to them.

Absorbed with the thoughts the sight of these women had rekindled in my brain, I took a somewhat irregular course toward my objective. Solly, worn out with the unbroken watching day and night, was lying face downward under the poplars, fast asleep. The creaking of the door as I

THE OUTCAST

entered made the sick woman start up and turn her head quickly. For the moment her senses seemed to be dazed, and there was mist in her eyes.

“You are better somewhat?” Her lips muttered something in response and a faint smile lit up her features. “And you are happy, too, I hope?” She looked at me in silence.

“You are not unhappy, Esther? Jesus gives us joy.”

“But for one thing,” she whispered, and a heavy cough brought a deep pink to her cheeks. “It is hard to die here, sir. Won’t you send me—home—to mother?”

“If that is your wish. It means a long, long journey.”

“How long?” she interrupted.

“Sixteen hundred miles; and you are hardly fit for it.”

“Sixteen hundred miles—not very fit.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

But it will be easier to die there. Won't you send me home?"

"Yes, Esther, you will go home, please God, just as soon as we can arrange; and the nurse will go, too."

Her face was aglow with joy and she closed her eyes in peace.

Meanwhile, Solly came in, and at the sound of his feet on the threshold she opened her eyes again. The expression on her face revealed her love for him—and what a love!

"Solly," she said, as she stretched out to him her feeble hand, "I'm going home to mother. Love me to the—" She could say no more.

He bent over the bed, his face sorrowful, and kissed her on the forehead.

That night a note was sent to the press: "There is a young woman dying in a shack—it is a case more for pity than for blame. She is pleading to be sent home to

THE OUTCAST

her mother to die. There are two courses open: We can either leave her here to die and find a pauper's grave, or we can send her home to die in a mother's arms. It seems to me as if every mother-heart would say, 'Send her home—send her home.' We need within the next few hours two hundred and fifty dollars."

The response, as liberal as it was immediate, came from a hundred hearts. Mothers came, fathers came, their hearts bleeding, for was she not somebody's child? Young men came, young women came, and all in haste, for was she not their sister, fallen though she was.

It was a beautiful day. The gold and purple haze of the Indian summer stretched like a counterpane over the valley, and there, far-off, lay the mountains, like sleeping kings with their coronets of snow, and clad in shining armor silhouetted against the blue. The stillness

THE BROKEN TRAIL

that hovered over the little cabin was broken only by the gentle breeze that stirred the branches of the poplars.

"Won't you send me home?" She was speaking in delirium.

"Poor gal," said Solly, as he moved toward her, "She's a-dreaming of home." He raised her up and spoke her name into her ear.

"Mother—mother!" And she passed away in his arms.

An hour later Solly, flushed and nervous, brought me the news of her death.

"She ain't go to Chicago now, poor gal," he said, trying to control himself in the great struggle between love and grief. "She ain't go now."

"Yes, Solly," I replied, "she will go, dead indeed, but she will go; and you—you will go with her."

He turned away his head and put his hands to his eyes as if pain and perplexity

THE OUTCAST

were there. I waited for the answer. "Tell me, Solly, will you go to Chicago—to-night?"

"To-night!" he exclaimed, and hesitated a little. "I—I—will, sir. When does the train go?" That was all he could say. Something suffocating was in his throat. The tides were rising.

"And there is this, too, Solly—tell me what you are going to do when you go to Chicago?"

"Going to do better, sir," he replied, as he stepped forward to the door. "Yesterday was Atonement Day."

A dark procession of women accustomed to prowl about in the night was on its way to the little cabin. When I reached the door they were standing outside, about twenty of them, and the sound of their lamentations made the night melancholy. As I arose to speak, some of them bowed

THE BROKEN TRAIL

their heads, others held their handkerchiefs to their eyes. I told them of the sinner's Friend, and of the deliverance and home-coming from the house of bondage that awaited them. For had the Deliverer not come? Why need they despair?

"Now for the last time you will look upon the face of your friend Esther. Write her name upon your hearts. Oh, Esther, if you could speak to us now, what would you say? 'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

"By her whom you cannot think of without a gush of tears; by the memory of your mother in heaven to-night; by the love that saves you and me to the uttermost, arise out of Egypt."

in solemn silence. The crucifix was in her hand, pressed closely to her breast—she had died holding it.

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

(A COMMENTARY.)

WITHIN every city, large and small, there is another city—a city within a city. Chicago has its Harrison Street—Paris its Latin Quartier—London its Piccadilly—New York its Bowery—a city without a church, without a child, without a home, as old as the first civilization and as new as our own. It has preserved its identity and citizenship despite the evolution of our moral and ethical standards.

There it stands, black and foul against the skies with the smoke of human sacrifice—the forbidden city, the graveyard of our civilization.

So much has been said about the methods employed to replete its short-lived population—so much more may be said. Statistics are given us of the maximum wages in some stores and factories

THE BROKEN TRAIL

where young girls are kept on the borderland of starvation. We believe the day is near when the state will make it impossible for such unscrupulous employers to amass a fortune at the sacrifice of the girlhood and womanhood of the nation.

The modern Shylock who demands his pound of flesh at whatever cost, philanthropist or religionist though he be, should be branded as a criminal of the vilest character, and dealt with on the statute books under the penal code.

There is, too, the man or woman who visits the quiet country villages and allures the unsuspecting maiden to the great city with the promise of high wages and easy work. These agents travel over the continent and in Europe, sending their human freight to the marts of the city, where they are sold unwittingly and involuntarily into the maelstrom of vice and crime.

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

Listen to this tale, commonplace enough. In one of our northern towns a young woman, a Scotch immigrant, came to see her brother. She arrived a day sooner than he expected, consequently he was not at the station to meet her. She waited all day. Towards evening a matronly woman entered into conversation with her and persuaded her to go to her home until the morning. When she arrived there she was locked into a room. The next day the brother learned that his sister had arrived. He informed the police. A search was made. They found her in a brothel, where she had been incarcerated and compelled, in spite of her cries and protests, to surrender herself to the shame and ignominy of an inmate.

But what shall we say of the wretch who comes into a Christian home, wins the confidence and love of a sweet, pure girl,

THE BROKEN TRAIL

and in an unsuspecting hour ruins her life and sends her to the cross alone?

Alone! For such is the double standard of morals recognized by society that the one goes to the wilderness—the other to the drawing-room. Indeed it has become almost a thing heroic for a young man to steal the bloom from the flower of virtue. In the words of the uncrowned queen of American women, let us have “a white life for two.”

When the Portland Fair closed there were hundreds of girls missing that have never been found. In New York City there are one thousand nameless graves every month. There are three hundred thousand erring girls in America, and three-fourths of them have been ruined by some trickery or treachery. In Chicago there are twenty-five thousand fallen women, only twenty per cent. of whom entered the life willingly. Every year

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

sixty-four thousand girls are brought into slavery on this continent, and most of them against their will. Girls are being sold at the rate of one hundred every twenty-four hours.

Thus they come to the Forbidden City, the only asylum and refuge left for them in a cold, inhospitable world, other than the grave. But, ah, me, the grave were better. For they who have once passed through the gates into this city need not the imagery of a Dante to depict for them the horror of the Inferno. The longing for a better life in the saner moments of their existence, that in the aftermath only makes more bitter the hopelessness and the despair; the drug that gives sleep in the hour of weariness; the wine that stimulates in the hour of remorse; the cigarette that soothes the jaded nerves—without them no picture of hell will ever be complete.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

What has the Church done for the city within the city? Society has built a wall around it. I wonder if the Church will ever make a way out.

It is not to be demolished by the pulling down of brick and mortar, nor by the battering-ram of law and polemics; else, numbered among the dead cities of the past, it would to-day be of interest only to the relic-hunter and to the antiquarian.

It seems to me there is but one way out. It may not be through the Church as an organization. For this fact leaps to our eyes, that the trend of modern church life is to get away from the centre of vice and crime to some popular and fashionable suburb where salvation is easy and service claims but little sacrifice. If the Church had realized her Master's commission to the city within the city, there would not be so many down-town churches to-day handed over to the distiller and the mer-

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

chant prince, and those for whom Christ died left to perish like the beasts that browse on the hillside.

Among the names we enshrine in our hearts and write on the list of the world's heroes two will not be forgotten: Elizabeth Fry, who spent her life reclaiming her fallen sisters, and Father Damien, who was not afraid to stoop down and kiss the leper on the cheek.

So, methinks, it will only be through the devotion and sacrifice of noble women and pure men, who are not afraid to lay down their lives in the service of blighted womanhood—and all for Christ's sake—that the walls of the city will fall and the day of deliverance come.

There is a prejudice, we know, against work of this kind. Society, with its cliques and castes, finessing and trimming, gathers up in its arms the robes of respectability and passes by on the other side.

THE BROKEN TRAIL

But let every Canadian woman refuse to be ruled by these absolute and un-Christian standards, and ask herself the question, What would Jesus do?

So I plead for a League of Social Service, which shall recognize no distinction in church or creed or caste, nothing but a divine and universal sisterhood. It should include both men and women, inspired with the love of Christ, and enthused with one ideal, the redemption of the city within the city.

All over our country there are hundreds of quiet Christian homes which might be opened to receive one of these girls until the time came when she could venture forth into the world again fit for its tasks and responsibilities.

In a mining town in British Columbia a minister's wife opened her home and in four years mothered five of them from a life of shame. We believe the time is now

THE FORBIDDEN CITY

when this method should be recognized as more practical and effectual than centralizing them in rescue homes.

This is what we mean by the League of Social Service, and all our talk about the evangelization of the world will only be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal if it means less to you and to me than that the city within the city must first be won for Christ. For so long as one stone stands upon another your mission and mine to the world remains unaccomplished and our Christianity incomplete.



**University of Toronto
Library**

**DO NOT
REMOVE
THE
CARD
FROM
THIS
POCKET**

**Acme Library Card Pocket
LOWE-MARTIN CO. LIMITED**

